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JIHAD IN ISLAM

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JIHAD IN ISLAM

Islam has been much maligned and misrepresented. It has indeed greatly suffered from misinterpretation and misrepresentation both on the part of its detractors and votaries. Its enemies wilfully and deliberately misrepresent many of its principles and doctrines while some of the leaders of religious thought in Islam have equally defamed and lowered it in the estimation of the world by ascribing to it principles which are totally foreign to the whole spirit and traditions of Islam. And of all the doctrines, tenets and principles of Islam none has been so cruelly distorted and mutilated to suit the propagandic purposes of the Christian preachers and publicists as its teaching about *Jihad* and they seem to be so sure of their ground in believing Islam to be a militant religion quite incapable of tolerating a rival faith as to declare that " the spread of Islam by arms is a religious duty imposed upon Muslims in general."[1]

[1] *Encyclopædia of Islam*, art. *Jihad*.

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Is Islam an Intolerant Religion ?

Some of these Christian writers of acknowledged learning and erudition and generally accepted as authorities on Islam go so far as to define *Jihad* as " the religious duty inculcated in the Quran on the followers of Muhammad to wage war upon those who do not accept the doctrines of Islam.[1]

In order to show that this entirely baseless notion about *Jihad* of the Christian writers, is not casual and haphazard but is maintained seriously and deliberately we give below two more quotations from the two Encyclopædias we have already quoted. The writer of the article, " Islamic Institutions " in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th edition, expresses his opinion about *Jihad* as follows :

> Unbelievers must be invited to embrace Islam and, if they follow a sacred book and are not idol-worshippers, are given a choice between (*a*) becoming Muslims; or (*b*) submitting to the Muslims and entering on a treaty with them of protection and tribute; or (*c*) fighting. If they accept Islam, their lives, families and property are secure, and they form henceforth part of the Muslim community. If they submit and enter on treaty relations, they pay a poll tax, for which their personal safety is assured, and assume a definitely inferior status, having no technical citizenship in the state, only the condition of protected clients (*dhimmis*). If they elect to fight, the door of repentance is open, even when the armies are face to face. But after defeat their lives are forfeit, their families are liable to slavery, and all their goods to seizure. Apostates must be put to death.

The writer of the article on *Jihad* in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* thus supplements his views about *Jihad* given above :

> In the Meccan Suras of the Kur'án patience under attack is taught; no other attitude was possible. But at Medina,

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th edition, art. *Jihad*.

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> the right to repel attack appears, and gradually it became a prescribed duty to fight against and subdue the hostile Meccans. Whether Muhammad himself recognized that his position implied steady and unprovoked war against the unbelieving world until it was subdued to Islam may be in doubt. Traditions are explicit on the point; but the Kuranic passages speak always of the unbelievers who are to be subdued as dangerous or faithless.

We quote two more Christian authorities to show that this wrong view about the Islamic *Jihad* is very widely held:

> The chief fault we have to find in Muhammad was the propagation of his doctrines by the sword, the use of wicked means to bring about a good end.[1]

> Jihad—the fighting against unbelievers with the object of either winning them over to Islam, or subduing and exterminating them in case they refuse to become Muslims, and causing Islam to spread and triumph over all religions is considered a sacred duty of the Muslim nation.[2]

Black Record of Christianity

To the allegations and accusations embodied in these quotations we shall refer later on when we shall deal with them at great length but could we here ask these 'honest' students of the Quran and Islamic history whether they have ever cared to see the beam of their own eyes before trying to detect a mote—if at all they can really detect even a mote—in the eye of Islam. It does not lie in the mouth of the followers of a religion whose founder "came not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew, 10 : 34) and whose popes, bishops and archbishops excommunicated, killed and burned at the stake poor, helpless and innocent persons of their own faith who could not persuade themselves to fully agree with those high dignitaries of the Church on some doctrinal points,

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[1] *Beacon Lights of History.*

[2] Klein's *The Religion of Islam.*

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those owing allegiance to other faiths were considered to deserve, and therefore got, no mercy;[1] who would murder in cold blood a person to save his soul from eternal damnation and whose wrath pursued the defenceless victim with unabated fury even after his death.[2]

The Vicar of Christ dared not open his lips when in the teeth of solemn international pacts and pledges from that very town where lies the Vatican hundreds of thousands of Italians sailed to dark Africa to rain death and destruction from the air by bombs, poisonous gases and fluid fire, upon the unprotected and defenceless Abyssinians for no fault except that they were too weak to offer an effective resistance to Mussolini's Black Shirts. Those whose whole record is so black can ill afford to fling mud at Islam.

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[1] A bloody sacrifice was offered by his mistaken votaries to the God of the Christians; resistance might provoke, but neither age nor sex could mollify their implacable rage; they indulged themselves three days in a promiscuous massacre; and the infection of the dead bodies produced an epidemical disease. After seventy thousand Muslims had been put to the sword, and the harmless Jews had been burned in the synagogue, they could still reserve a multitude of captives, whom interest or lassitude persuaded them to spare.—*Historians' History of the World*, Vol. VIII, Page 352.

[2] Death did not protect heretics from the condemnation of the Inquisition. Trial after death was not unknown to the Romans; it was applied to criminals who had committed treason, and, in case of conviction, entailed confiscation of property and spoliation of heirs. The analogy established by Innocent III (bull of March 25 1199) between heresy and the crime of treason led the tribunals of the Inquisition to punish deceased heretics just as if they were still alive. They were regarded as condemned in default, and treated accordingly; their goods were seized and their remains exhumed. The exhumation was carried out with great solemnity; bones and even semi-decomposed bodies were carried through the streets to the sounds of trumpets, and then burned at the stake. The names of the dead were proclaimed, and the living were threatened with a similar fate if they followed their example.—*Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. *Inquisition*.

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Some Impartial Christian Writers

But whereas a large number of the Christian writers when writing about Islam and the Prophet of Islam take leave of all fairness and impartiality, there are others of a better calibre who record things as they find them and not as they wish they should be. For people of this class there is much in the teaching of Islam to show that not only Islam was never indebted to the swords and spears of its followers for its phenomenal spread and expansion, it positively and forcibly condemns the employment of force for the achievement of this very sublime purpose. Islam is a missionary religion. Its message is confined to no particular time, clime or people. It claims to offer guidance in all spheres of life to all nations, in all times and under all sorts of circumstances. But it seeks to preach its message by prayer, persuasion and other peaceful methods. That the spread of Islam has been due to these methods and not to the use of force has been testified to by several impartial Christian writers. Here is one of those testimonies :

> Nevertheless the Holy War is not imposed as a duty except and only in the case of enemies of Islamism being the aggressors. Only an arbitrary interpretation by theologians can take the orders otherwise.
>
> Another equal error is to think that Islamism has been propagated by force. Political power certainly has been extended in that way, not religion. The Caliphs, far from seeking to make proselytes for reasons of pecuniary interest saw with much displeasure the conversion of conquered peoples.[1]

Man's Place in God's Creation

Man is God's noblest handiwork. The Almighty has created him in His own image and has implanted in him such qualities and has endued him with such

[1] *Historians' History of the World*, Vol. VIII, p. 270.

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capacities and capabilities that he can rise to the highest imaginable pinnacles of moral and spiritual glory. He is God's vicegerent on earth[1] and the king of His whole creation. To him the angels in heaven make obeisance and the earth, heaven, moon, sun, stars, mountains, rivers, oceans, animals, birds, all animate and inanimate things have been made subservient.[2] He is but a miniature world and in his spirit is represented on a small scale all that exists in the outward world. By creating man God has, as it were, enclosed in a nutshell the various forces existing in the world.

This is the very high conception of man that the Holy Prophet of Arabia gave to the world. Before his time man was regarded as one of the innumerable things created by God and inferior in his inborn qualities and capacities to many of them. This is why he worshipped the sun and the moon, he worshipped stocks and stones, trees, rivers and poisonous reptiles; anything that filled him with awe or fear he began to adore. Islam brought about a fundamental change in man's conception about his place in creation. It gave him a new position, a new status. He was declared to be the acme of God's creation, its aim and end.

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[1] And remember when thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create a Vicegerent in the earth' (2 : 30).

And remember when *We* said to the angels: 'Make obeisance to Adam' and they did obeisance save *Iblis* (2 : 34).

[2] And He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon pursuing their courses, and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them (14 : 33, 34).

And He has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and in the earth, all from Himself (35 : 13).

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Sanctity of Human Life

It is only natural that that religious book which raised man to such a high pedestal should have attached the greatest importance and sanctity to his life and should not have denied him freedom of conscience. Of all things man's life, according to the Quran, is most sacred and inviolable. It is a sacrilege to take it except under rare circumstances which the Quran has specified. According to the Quran the killing of an innocent person is tantamount to the killing of all men, so sacred and sanctified is man's life. "He who slayeth any one," says the Quran, "unless it be a person guilty of man-slaughter, or of spreading disorders in the land, shall be as though he had slain all mankind; but he who saveth a life, shall be as though he has saved all mankind alive" (5 : 32).

Again the Quran says : "And do not kill any one whom God has forbidden you to slay unless for a just cause" (17 : 33). So according to the Quran under no circumstances can the life of any man be taken except that of a murderer, of one who wages war against God and His Apostle or of one who creates disorder in the land. Not only the Quran but the Holy Prophet has also laid the greatest stress on the sacredness of human life. "The greatest of sins," he says, "is to set up equals with God, to kill a person and to defy or disobey parents."[1] Again he says : "On the Day of Judgment the first things that men shall have to render an account of will be prayer and bloods innocently shed.[2] It is only under the above three

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[1] اكبر الكبائر الاشراك بالله وقتل النفس وعقوق الوالدين (بخاري)

[2] اول ما يحاسب به العبد الصلواة و اول ما يقضي بين الناس يوم القيامة في الدماء (نسائي)

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conditions that a properly constituted authority can take the life of a man. There is no other condition mentioned in the Quran or anywhere in the books of *Hadith* under which a person could be killed. Ransack all the books of *Hadith* and *Fiqh* and you will come across no verse or saying of the Holy Prophet conflicting with or contradicting the above Quranic injunctions regarding the killing of a person. Then what is the authority of those Christian writers who confidently assert that Islam attached so little value to human life that it allowed an unbeliever to be killed for refusing to accept it against the verdict of his conscience and that in the heyday of their glory and grandeur the Muslims offered the subject races the alternative of Islam or death, we do not know. The history of the Christian Church, indeed, is replete with examples of persons who were mercilessly killed, flayed alive, burnt at the stake, drowned in the sea, thrown before hungry lions or wolves for no fault except that, obeying the dictates of their inner voice they felt constrained to disagree with the leaders of the Church on some points of doctrine. Those who professed and followed a faith other than Christianity the Christians killed without the least compunction or hesitation. Islam has never been guilty of such an heinous crime, and the Muslim rulers, in harmony with the teaching of their faith, have always given unqualified freedom of conscience and the unrestricted exercise of their religious rites to those non-Muslims who have lived under their protection.

Islam on Freedom of Conscience

Freedom of conscience is humanity's most precious heritage—more precious than life itself. Islam, according to which man is God's noblest creation and to whose

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life it has attached the greatest sanctity, could not fail to acknowledge and declare the sacredness and inviolability of this his most valuable possession. A religion which does not accord unqualified recognition to this inalienable right of man, brings him down to the degraded position of beasts and brutes and a religion which declares man to be God's vicegerent on earth certainly cannot deprive him of this right. Consistently with its conception of man's very exalted status Islam has recognised the inviolability of this right about which he is so jealous. The Quran says :

> And say : 'The truth is from your Lord, so let him then who will, believe ; and let him who please disbelieve'.
> (18 : 29)

> Say : 'O people ! indeed there has come to you the truth from your Lord, therefore whoever goes aright, he goes aright only for the good of his own soul, and whoever goes astray, he goes astray only to the detriment of it, and I am not a custodian over you'.
> (10 : 108)

> Let there be no compulsion in religion. Now is the right way made distinct from error ; therefore whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on a strong handle which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.
> (2 : 256)

Some Illustrations

These injunctions did not remain a dead letter. They were carried into actual practice. The Prophet and his Companions always lived up to their professions and strictly obeyed the divine ordinances even if acting upon them meant a serious financial loss to them,

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Before the arrival of Islam there was prevalent among the pagan Arab tribes of Medina, the Aus and Khazraj a highly superstitious and degrading practice that if a father went childless for a long time he would take a pledge that if a son were born to him, he would have him converted to Judaism. When in consequence of their repeated perfidies the Banu Nazeer, a Jewish tribe, were ordered to leave Medina, they made ready to take with them a large number of boys who belonged to the above two tribes but in fulfilment of their oaths had been given to Banu Nazeer to be brought up as Jews. The Aus and Khazraj who had since then embraced Islam resented their own children being taken away by the Jews and insisted on their being kept back and converted to Islam, if necessary, by force. A dispute arose as to with whom the boys were to remain—with their real or adopted parents. The situation developed into a highly delicate one. Muslim parents could not entertain the idea of allowing their own sons to go into banishment with the Jews. The Jews on the other hand were equally insistent on taking them. The Quran could allow the use of no force in a matter of religion and conscience. "Let there be no compulsion in religion" was its explicit and unqualified verdict. The choice was left to the youngmen themselves. They were allowed to go with the Jews if they so liked and they chose not to change the religion in which they were brought up for the new faith. The whole history of religion fails to produce a noble example of such religious tolerance and broad-mindedness. The youngmen were the kith and kin of the Aus and Khazraj. They were the flesh of their flesh, the bones of their bones. The Jewish tribe, the Banu Nazeer, were utterly at the mercy of the Muslims. The Muslims could, if they would, compel them to accept Islam along with their own sons. But

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that was against their religion, their cherished principles and not only were the Jews allowed to leave Medina unmolested and in the full possession of all their belongings but were also allowed to take with them the youngmen belonging to Muslim tribes of Aus and Khazraj[1] (*Abu Daood*).

This incident has been described in the following *hadith*. Mujahid relates: "Some persons from among the *Ansar* were brought up by Banu Quraiza and they had adopted Judaism as their religion. When, however, Islam was introduced in Medina and the *Ansar* joined it *en masse*, they sought to compel these persons to give up Judaism in favour of Islam. It is on that occasion that the verse, 'there must be no compulsion in religion,' was revealed to the Prophet" (*Durr-i-Mansoor*, Vol. I, p. 329).[2]

Ibn-i-Abbas says: "The verse, 'there must be no compulsion in religion' was revealed about a person from the *Ansar* tribe of Banu Salam bin Auf known as Hasseen. His two sons were Christians while he himself was a thorough-going Muslim. He enquired of the Holy Prophet whether he should not compel them to accept Islam because they were not prepared of

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[1] فلما اجليت بنو نضير كان فيهم من ابناء الانصار فقالوا لا ندع ابناء نا فانزل الله تعالي لا اكراه في الدين ..... الخ (ابو داؤد. كتاب الجهاد)

[2] عن مجاهد قال كان ناس من الانصار مسترضعين في بني قريظة فثبتوا علي دينهم فلما جاء الاسلام اراد اهلوهم ان يكرهوهم علي الاسلام فنزلت لا اكراه في الدين (در منثور)

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their own accord, to give up Christianity."[1]

In the face of such unrivalled exhibition of religious tolerance it is simply inconceiveable that Islam should have ever been accused of fanaticism and religious bigotry and intolerance. And this is no solitary example of the broad-mindedness the Muslims displayed in religious matters. Asbaq, a Christian slave of Omar, tells us that while living with the Caliph, he on several occasions persuaded him to accept Islam but he always refused and when his persistent refusal to accept Islam would hurt the Caliph he consoled himself by reciting the Quranic verse, "there is no compulsion in religion." "And," adds Asbaq, "the Caliph once said to me, 'if you had embraced Islam, we would have sought your counsel in many of the affairs of the Muslims,' and when Omar was about to die, he liberated me and said that I was free to go wherever I chose."[2]

The list of such instances of which Islam is justly proud does not exhaust with the above two incidents. Aslam relates : " I heard the Caliph Omar saying to an

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[1] عن ابن عباس فی قوله لا اکراہ في الدین قال نزلت في رجل من الانصار من بني سالم بن عوف یقال له الحصین. کان له ابنان نصرانیان و کان هو رجلا مسلما فقال للنبي صلی الله علیه وسلم الا استکرههما فانهما قد ابیا الا النصرانیة فانزل الله فی ذالک (در منثور)

[2] عن اسبق قال کنت في دینهم مملوکاً نصرانیاً لعمر ابن الخطاب فکان یعرض علي الاسلام فابیت فیقول لا اکراہ فی الدین ویقول یا اسبق لو اسلمت لاستعنابک علي بعض امور المسلمین .....فلما حضرته الوفاة اعتقنی فقال اذهب حیث شئت (در منثور)

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old Christian woman 'accept Islam and you will be saved.' She refused. Upon this exclaimed Omar, 'be Thou my witness, O God, that I have presented Islam to her' and then recited the verse, 'there must be no compulsion in religion'."[1] Picture to your mind Omar, one of the greatest monarchs of all time, begging a poor, decrepit Christian woman to accept Islam as it would give her mental solace and spiritual salvation and the old woman rejecting his offer with disdain and the Caliph feeling helpless calling God to witness that he had done his duty, and then say if there could be perpetrated a greater outrage on the integrity of Islam than to allege that it allowed the use of force for its propagation. The incident not only shows that perfect religious freedom prevailed under the Successors of the Holy Prophet but also that the relations between the Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects were cordial in the extreme and the latter were quite conscious of their religious and political rights which they freely exercised.

Ibn-i-Kaseer and Zamakhshari on Freedom of Conscience

The famous theologian and expositor of the Quran, Ibn-i-Kaseer in his world-renowned *Tafseer* (commentary on the Quran) explains the verse *La ikrāha fid-din* as follows :

> Do not compel any body to accept Islam, because it is so compelling and convincing and the arguments and reasons that establish its truth are so evident and manifest that it does not stand in need of compelling people to

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[1] عن اسلم قال سمعت عمر ابن الخطاب يقول لعجوز نصرانية اسلمي تسلمي. فابت. فقال عمر اللهم اشهد. ثم تلي لا اكراه في الدين (در منثور)

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join it. He whom God has vouchsafed guidance and has opened his heart for the acceptance of truth and has endowed him with internal light, shall accept it on the basis of clear and shining proofs but he upon whose hearing and sight God has set a seal will not benefit Islam in the least by joining it.[1]

Zamakhshari, another equally learned expositor in his exegesis entitled *Alkashāf* supports this view of Ibn-i-Kaseer. Explaining this verse he says:

God has not allowed the use of force in matters of faith but has left it to the choice and selection of man. To this view another verse of the Quran lends support wherein God says: 'And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed all of them, will you then force men that they become believers' that is if God had so pleased He would have compelled people into believing but He has left the matter of faith and belief to their choice.[2]

This explanation of Ibn-i-Kaseer and Zamakhshari is supported by many other verses of the Quran and as the matter is of great importance, we make no apology for giving some more verses which give the direct lie to the charge that Islam countenanced the use of force for its propagation and expansion. Here are some of those verses:

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[1] لا تكرهوا احداً على الدخول فى دين الاسلام فانه بين واضح جلي دلائله و براهينه لايحتاج الي ان يكره احد على الدخول فيه بل من هداه الله للاسلام وشرح صدره ونور بصيرته دخل فيه علي بينة ومن اعمي الله قلبه وختم علي سمعه و بصره فانه لايفيده الدخول في الدين مكرها متقسورا (ابن كثير)

[2] لم يجر الله امر الايمان علي الاجبار والقسر ولكن علي التمكن والاختيار ونحوه قوله ولوشاء ربك لامن من في الارض كلهم جميعا أفانت تكره الناس حتى يكونوا مومنين اى لوشاء لقسرهم علي الايمان ولكن لم يفعل وبني الامر علي الاختيار (الكشاف)

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Perhaps you will wear yourself away with grief because they will not believe. Were it our will we could send down to them a sign from the heaven, before which they would humbly bow (26 : 3, 4).

We know best what they say and you are not to compel them. Warn them by the Quran those who fear My threat (50 : 45).

Warn them then; for you are a warner only; you have no authority over them (88 : 21, 22).

Surely you can not guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases, and He knows best the followers of the right way (28 : 56).

And if your Lord had so willed, He would certainly have made people one nation but they shall continue to differ. Except those on whom Your Lord has mercy and for this did He create them (9 : 118, 119).

But if they dispute with you, then say: 'I have submitted myself entirely to Allah and so has every one of my followers' and say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: Do you submit yourselves. If they submit, then indeed they follow the right way, and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message and Allah sees His servants (2 : 19).

Charge of Intolerance

Verses from the Quran could easily be multiplied to show that not only it does not encourage the use of force for the spread of the Islamic faith but positively and in most emphatic terms discourages and condemns it. Not a single verse from the Quran or a single incident from the life of the Holy Prophet or his Successors and his chosen Companions can be quoted which may lend the faintest support to the idea that Islam views with favour or approval that people may either be cajoled or coerced into accepting it. There had come in the life of the Holy Prophet several occasions when he could, if he so desired, inflict by force his own faith on the people who sought and received his protection. But he never did so. He should not have done so. Even if he were not

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a Prophet of God and the bearer of a divine mission but only a military adventurer who rose to great power and happened to build a mighty empire, he could not and should not have compelled people by force to cast in their lot with him as such people evidently of doubtful sincerity and allegiance were sure to desert him on the first reverse he would have received from his opponents. But the people who are said by Christian writers to have been won over to Islam by force stood with the Prophet through thick and thin. They suffered all manner of persecution and privation and went through trials and tribulations with him and for him, gladly and joyfully. The world's history fails to produce a parallel to the devotion and sincerity with which the Prophet's Companions served him. This sincere and selfless devotion to the Holy Prophet on the part of his followers alone constitutes an unanswerable rebuttal of the wicked charge that these paragons of self-sacrifice, truth and honesty, were won over to Islam at the point of the sword. A more foolish and baseless charge it is difficult to imagine.

The Truce of Hudaibia

Islam is essentially a religion of peace. The whole tenor of its teachings and tenets tends to the creation of an atmosphere of peace and tolerance in which people may enjoy freedom of will and choice to the fullest extent and give their allegiance to that faith only which appeals most to their conscience and reason. The Holy Prophet was most anxious to have such an atmosphere created. War had been forced on him but during the course of the war whenever an occasion arose when he thought that there was a possibility, however remote, for such an atmosphere to be created, he did not let that opportunity go even if he had to submit to evidently humiliating terms. One

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such occasion arose in the sixth year of the *Hijrat*, when in conformity with a dream which the Holy Prophet had seen, he started for Mecca to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage (عمرہ) accompanied by 1,400 Muslims and the Truce of Hudaibia was signed. In all the annals of the chequered history of Islam perhaps no incident shines forth with greater lustre and glory than this Truce. Some of its terms were :

(1) That the Muslims should return this year;

(2) That next year they should not stay in Mecca for more than three days;

(3) That they should not bring their arms with them with the exception of their swords sheathed in scabbards ;

(4) That they should not take with them any Muslim who is living in Mecca even if he himself so desires and on the contrary if any Muslim should prefer to remain in Mecca, he should not be compelled to go back to Medina ;

(5) That if any of the infidels or the Muslims living then in Mecca should go to Medina he should be returned forthwith but if any Muslim should go to Mecca from Medina, he shall not be returned.

The terms of the truce were so glaringly humiliating that the Companions of the Holy Prophet who had never before questioned the propriety of what he did or said were greatly perturbed and the great Omar went so far as even to remonstrate with him. This humiliating truce, this apparently discreditable agreement, this pact obviously unique in the annals of all

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international treaties proves beyond the shadow of a doubt

(1) that the Prophet desired to have peace restored in Arabia at the cost of even his prestige ;

(2) that he was perfectly convinced that a peaceful atmosphere was more conducive to the spread of Islam than a disturbed one.

The Holy Prophet's belief that a peaceful atmosphere was more conducive to the expansion of his faith was not unfounded. Islam had not made so much progress in the preceding 19 years as it did in the two years that elapsed between the signing of the Truce at Hudaibia and its violation by the Meccans.

The Holy Prophet Vindicated

The violation of the truce renewed the war. Mecca lay prostrate under the heels of the Prophet, the same Mecca where he and his Companions had received outrageous treatment and from which he had to flee to save his life and in whose streets had run the blood of innocent Muslims. Did he forget his moderation and magnanimity in the hour of his triumph? Did he take any revenge? Did he now that the Meccans were entirely at his mercy impose his faith on them? No. There were no proscription lists, no plunder, no wanton revenge. Every one who shut the door of his house was safe. A few years ago at the battle of Badr a large number of the Meccans were made prisoners. Expediency, consideration of the exigencies of the time and the interests of the infant Muslim State demanded that the prisoners be put to death. The great Omar voted for their death. Did the

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Prophet accept Omar's advice and did he foist his faith on them now that their lives were in his hands? He did nothing of the sort, but on the contrary gave strict orders that they should be treated with the greatest humanity, and that respect should be paid to their misfortunes. William Muir quotes one of these prisoners as saying: "Blessing be on the men of Medina, they made us ride while they themselves walked, they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates." After the battle of Honain when he was the undisputed master of the whole of Arabia he gave back to 6,000 prisoners of the Bani Mustalaq their liberty after they had forfeited it by unjustly launching an attack upon him. He could, if he would, compel these people to accept his faith but he did not. The Prophet's life is full of instances of the extraordinarily benign treatment he extended to his fallen foes. Mercy was shown to them before it was asked and yet this is the great and noble man at whose orders and following whose example, the Christian writers say, his followers killed innocent, helpless people in the name of religion and offered to the vanquished peoples the alternative of death or Islam; and who left behind him a faith which approves the use of the sword for the sake of religion. Could injustice and blind prejudice go further?

The Prophet's Charters of Freedom

Not only was the Prophet most scrupulous to see that no pressure of any kind was exerted on and no temptation held out to any one to embrace Islam, but he left permanent instructions in the books of *Hadith* that full respect be paid to the religious susceptibilities of the followers of other religions who had agreed to

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live under Muslim protection in addition to the express, clear and unequivocal injunctions in the Quran to this effect. The charters of religious freedom he granted to Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians are a standing testimony to his own broad-mindedness and that of the religious system he founded. Here are some of those charters :

Treaty with the Jews

According to *Ibn Hishām*, the treaty which he entered into with the Medinites runs as follows :—

> This is the pledge of the safety which Mohammad, the Prophet of God, gives to the Muslims whether they be from the tribe of Quraish or from Medina and to all people irrespective of the tribe to which they belong or the religion which they profess, who have promised to remain on peaceful terms with him and his followers. The state of war or of peace will apply to all Muslims and no Muslim will be permitted to fight or make peace with the enemies of Islam on his own responsibility. Jews who live under our protection will be guarded against all sorts of persecutions and indignities and they will be equally entitled to our shelter, help and good treatment along with the Muslims. The Jews belonging to the tribes of Bani Auf, Bani Najjar, Bani Haris, Bani Jaasam, Bani Ghalib, Bani Aus and all other inhabitants of Medina will form, in conjunction with the Muslims, one community and they will exercise the rights and perform the rites of their religion as freely as would the Muslims. Those who have entered into a treaty of friendship with them and are under their protection will enjoy the same rights as are accorded to the Jews. The Jews will help the Muslims in defending Medina. All those who would accept this alliance will be protected and guarded. The friends of the Jews will be accorded the same honourable treatment as is accorded to themselves. All true Muslims will have nothing to do with any one who would be guilty of any sin, tyranny, dissensions and rebellion and no one will help a culprit however nearly he may be related to him. All the differences and disputes of those who accept this pledge of safety will be referred to and decided by the Prophet of God.

Charter of Freedom Granted to All Christians

The charter of freedom which the Prophet granted to the Christians of Najaran was later on extended to

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the Christians of all Islamic countries. It reads thus :

> This is the document which Muhammad son of Abdullah, God's Prophet, Warner and Bearer of glad tidings, has caused to be written, so that there should remain no excuse for those coming after. I have caused this document to be written for the Christians of the East and the West, for those who live near, and for those of the distant lands, for the Christians living at present and for those who will come after, for those Christians who are known to us and for these as well whom we do not know. Any Muslim violating and abusing what is therein ordered would be regarded as a violator of God's testament and would be the breaker of His promise and would make himself deserving of God's curse, be he a king or a subject.
>
> I promise that any monk or way-farer, etc., who will seek my help on the mountains, in forests, deserts or habitations, in places of worship, I will repel his enemies with all my friends and helpers, with all my relatives and with all those who profess to follow me and will defend him, because they are my subjects and to them my shelter is extended, that is, they are on my covenant. And I will defend the covenanted against the persecution, injury and embarrassment by their enemies in lieu of the poll-tax (*Jizya*) they have promised to pay.
>
> If they will prefer themselves to defend their properties and persons, they will be allowed to do so and will not be put to any inconvenience on that account. No bishop will be expelled from his bishopric, no monk from his monastery, and no priest from his place of worship and no pilgrim will be detained in his pilgrimage. None of their churches and other places of worship will be desolated or destroyed or demolished. No material of their churches will be used for building mosques or houses for the Muslims. Any Muslim so doing should be regarded as recalcitrant to God and His Prophet. Monks and bishops will be subjected to no tax (*jizya*) or indemnity, whether they live in forests or in the rivers, are in the East or West, North or South. I give them my word of honour. They are on my promise and covenant and will enjoy perfect immunity from all sorts of inconveniences. Those who retire to the mountains and dedicated places, the produce of their cultivated lands will not be subjected to tax or tithe and in times of scarcity of food they will not be compelled to contribute anything in the form of grain. No military service will be taken from them, nor will they be required to pay *jizya*. Not more than 12 *dirhams* per annum will be taken from their merchants, landholders and from the wealthy among them. None should be harassed and tyrannised for the payment of taxes. In

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religious controversies and disputations, they should be talked to with civilty and lenience. Let mercy overwhelm them wherever they may be and they should be protected from all troubles and injuries. He who broke God's covenant and adopted a defiant attitude, will be regarded as His enemy and the violator of His testament. Every help shall be given them in the repair of their churches. They shall be absolved from wearing arms. They shall be protected by the Muslims. Let this document be not disobeyed till the Judgment Day.[1]

Charter to the Zoroastrians

In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate. This is a letter from Muhammad, Allah's Apostle to Farrakh bin Shakhsan, brother of Salman and for his family and his progeny whether they become Muslim or stick to their religion. This letter is a pledge of protection from me to Farrukh bin Shakhsan and his posterity, for the safety of their persons wherever they live, whether in the plains or on the mountains. They will be entitled to the unrestricted use of the wells and meadows which are in their possession. They will not be maltreated and tyrannised. It is incumbent upon those also before whom this letter of mine is read that they protect Farrukh bin Shakhsan and his descendants and allow them full freedom and liberty of action and check others from harming them and should not evince malice against them by subjecting them to maltreatment and indignities. I overlook their particular custom of shaving and wearing *Zunnars* and forgive them the payment of all taxes together with the allied restrictions and inconveniences. They will enjoy, as usual, the full and unrestricted mastery over their sacred places and the lands and jagirs connected with them. They shall not be deterred from wearing good and ostentacious dresses, from riding on horses, making of buildings and stables and from carrying the corpses of their dead or from doing anything which their religion permits them. They shall be entitled to a better treatment than accorded to all other non-Muslims. Let no one disobey and dispute my this testament which I leave behind me, giving the co-religionists of Salman (Salman was a Zoroastrian before he accepted Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet) and the future generations of the Zoroastrians the free and unrestricted exercise of their religion and the protection of the Muslims, whether they accept Islam or remain Zoroastrians. He who will obey my command, God's mercy will descend on him. He who will disobey me on him shall fall the curse of God till the end of the world. He

[1] *Futuh-ul-Buldan Balazari*,

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who will be kind to them, will do me good and such a one will get his reward from God. He who will harass them will harass me. I will be his enemy till the Last Day. The fire of hell will be his recompense and I will not intercede for him before God.[1]

The Prophet's example proved contagious for his followers in this respect as it proved contagious in many other respects. We give below the treaty made at Aljabia by which Jerusalem was ceded to the Muslims, to show what great regard the Muslims, in pursuance of the injunctions of the Quran and the Holy Prophet had for the religious feelings of the followers of other faiths.[2] It may be noted in passing that Omar travelled to Jerusalem at the request of the Christian Patriarch who had expressed a wish that he would like to give the keys of the town into the hands of the Head of the Muslim State himself.

Treaty of Jerusalem

In the name of the Most Merciful God.

This is the treaty for the people of Aelia. This is the favour which the servant of God, the Commander of the Faithful grants to the people of Aelia. He gives them the assurance of the preservation of their lives and properties, their churches and crosses, of those who set up, who display and who honour these crosses. Your churches will not be transformed into dwellings nor destroyed, nor will any one confiscate anything belonging to them, nor the crosses or belongings of the inhabitants.

There will be no constraint in the matter of religion, nor the least annoyance. The Jews will inhabit Aelia conjointly with the Christians, and those who live there will requiie to pay the poll-tax, like the inhabitants of other towns. The Greeks are to leave the town, but will have a safe conduct until they reach a place of security. Still those who prefer to remain may do so on condition of paying the same poll-tax as the rest. If any of the people of Aelia desire to leave with the Greeks, taking their goods, but abandoning their chapels and (the) crosses (on them),

[1] *Futuh-ul-Buldan Balazari.*

[2] *The Caliphate*, W. Muir.

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they will be granted personal safety, until they arrive at a safe place. The strangers in the town may remain on the same condition of paying the tax, or, if they wish, they may leave also with the Greeks, and return to their own land. They will have nothing to pay until one harvest shall have been gathered in. All that this treaty contains is placed under the alliance and protection of God, and His Apostle (peace be upon him), and of his Successors, and of the Faithful, so long as they pay the tax.

Witnessed by Khalid Ibn al-Walid, A'mr ibn-al-A'as, Abdul Rahman ibn A'uf, and Moawia ibn Abi Sufyan.

More characteristic of a true Muslim than the spirit of catholicity, broadmindedness and religious tolerance displayed by Omar in making this treaty is the answer he gave to the Patriarch when the latter asked the Caliph to say his prayers in the church of the Resurrection. He declined to pray either there or in the church of Constantine where a carpet had been spread for him, saying kindly that if he did so his followers would take possession of the church for ever as a place where Muslim prayer had once been offered up (William Muir).

Magna Charta of the Freedom of Man's Beliefs and Convictions

Freedom of conscience, as we have said, is the birth right of man, his most precious heritage and invaluable possession. The realization of the sanctity of this most sacred of all his rights seems to have been ingrained in his nature. All through the ages man has steadfastly refused to give his conscience in the keeping of others and has resolutely declined to believe or disbelieve things at their bidding. This fact is writ large on the history of all religions. Men have been burned at the stake, stoned to death, buried alive, drowned in the sea because they refused to believe in things against which their conscience revolted or

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refused to part with their cherished convictions. Though urged by the voice of a sound conscience man has not surrendered this inalienable right and has successfully fought all attempts to violate it, yet its sacredness was not recognised in so many words in any divine or human statute book till Islam came into the world. This Declaration of the Freedom of Human Conscience or the Magna Charta of the Liberty of Man's Beliefs or Convictions was first of all granted to him by Islam and recognised as his inviolable right in the most perfect book of divine laws—the Quran embedded in the verse, 'let there be no compulsion in religion.' What adds to the sublimity of the great teaching contained in this verse is the fact that it was revealed after the permission to fight in self-defence was granted to the Muslims in which Christian writers pretend to detect the encouragement that Islam gives to its followers to use force for its spread. The verse embodied a solemn warning for the Muslims to this effect that now that they had been allowed to wage war against their enemies, they had to be especially on their guard against making use of the disturbed atmosphere of war to suppress the religious liberties of the people. The voice of God seemed to speak to the Muslims in the words: "You are allowed to fight in self-defence, to kill and capture your enemies but under no circumstances are you allowed to make use of this permission in compelling those who fall in your hands to accept your faith against their conscience." When to the commandment contained in the above verse to respect the religious susceptibilities of the followers of other faiths is added the fact that individual unbelievers even if they belonged to hostile tribes were granted safety and were given a safe conduct back to their tribes if they came to the

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Muslims to enquire about Islam,[1] the utter hollowness of the charge that the Muslims were encouraged to use force to spread their religion, becomes absolutely manifest. Such is Islam's broadmindedness. Truly has a great western writer said :

> May it not occur to the impartial reader that the religion of Mahomet, in its broad humanitarian charity, reflects the mind of God in a far more eminent degree than the prejudiced assertions of the dogmatic theologian or the inflexible systematist .

Islam to be Preached by Peaceful Methods

Far from enjoining its followers to spread their religion by force, the Quran has laid down in clear, unequivocal and emphatic terms that by persuasion and peaceful and loving methods alone should Islam be preached. The following verses describe the methods to be adopted by the Muslims for preaching and propagating Islam :

> Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner (16 : 15).

> And do not dispute with the followers of the Book except by what is best but those of them who act unjustly.

> Therefore turn aside from them and admonish them and speak to them in a manner as may deeply affect them (4 : 63).

The Muslims have been enjoined to have so great regard for the religious susceptibilities of the followers of other faiths that they are strictly prohibited to speak in insulting terms about even the idols of the polytheists as it is calculated to hurt them. Thus says the Quran :

> And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance (6 : 109).

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[1] If any of the infidels seeks protection from you, give him that protection till he hears the word of God, then send him back to his place of safety (9 : 6).

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These commandments of the Quran were adequately supplemented by the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet. When he sent an expedition he invariably would say to the Commander, "Be kind to the people and do not behave harshly towards them, let them be attached and attracted towards you and not hate you and run away from you."[1] When Mecca fell to the victorious arms of the Muslims, and the Prophet sent missionary expeditions in different directions exhorting people to accept Islam, he gave strict orders to their leaders not to indulge in fighting but to invite people to Islam with kindness and love.[2]

A religion which has such scrupulous regard for the religious beliefs and feelings of the followers of other faiths could not reasonably be expected to have commanded its followers to forcibly impose it on others.

A Widespread Misunderstanding

There is a saying of the Holy Prophet which seems to have given rise to the misconception that Islam gives sanction to the use of force for the spread of its teachings. That saying has evidently been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Torn out of its context it has been considered to possess a connotation which it refuses to bear. The Holy Prophet is reputed to have said: "I have been commanded to fight with the people till they accept Islam."[3] If the saying be taken

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[1] يسروا ولاتعسروا وبشروا ولاتنفروا
(بخاری - کتاب الجهاد)

[2] بعث النبی صلعم فیما حول المکة السرایا تدعوهم
الی عزوجل ولم یامرهم بالقتال (ابن جریر)

[3] امرت ان اقاتل الناس حتی یقولوا لا إله الا الله
الخ..... (بخاری. کتاب الایمان)

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to mean that the Holy Prophet was commanded to wage war against all non-believers and was not to hold his hands till they had accepted Islam, it evidently runs counter to the most explicit verses of the Quran, some of which we have quoted above and contradicts also his own injunctions and directions given to the commanders of Muslim armies sternly forbidding them from using force in any shape or form for the propagation of Islam, and also runs counter to his established practice and that of his Successors inasmuch as non-Muslims lived under Muslim kings peacefully afterwards and were granted charters of freedom by them. Surely in the face of such unchallengeable historical evidence, the above saying of the Holy Prophet cannot be interpreted in the way in which some malicious Christian writers have tried to interpret it. The entire text of the Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet constitute an incontrovertible refutation of the charge that the Prophet's military expeditions were undertaken with the sole object of imposing Islam on non-Muslims. The *hadith* in question refers only to those people against whom, on account of some act of villainy on their part, the Muslims had been compelled to wage war and is not a general instruction. It was an invariable practice of the Muslims that in such circumstances, before the actual hostilities commenced, in their solicitude to avoid the shedding of as much human blood as possible, their Commander as a last resort would tell the leaders of the opposing forces that they could escape the consequences of their criminal actions either by acknowledging their defeat and paying *jizya* which was a token of their submission or by accepting Islam in which case all their past transgressions would be forgiven and they would enjoy all the rights of the members of a sovereign State.

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Misconception Removed

This *hadith* of the Prophet finds a beautiful explanation in the talk that took place, before the battle of Qadsia which finally sealed the fate of the Persian empire, in the reign of Omar, between the members of the Muslim deputation and the Persian Emperor at Al-Medain. "Yezdejird", writes William Muir, "demanded through an interpreter, wherefore, thus unprovoked, they dared invade his kingdom. One after another the Arabian spokesmen told him of the Prophet who had wrought a mighty change in their land, and of the blessings and obligations of Islam. 'Embrace the Faith,' they said, 'and thou shalt be even as we'; or if thou wilt, pay tribute, and come under our protection; which things if thou refuse, the days of thy kingdom are numbered'." Now there could be no question of the Muslims invading Persian territory in their zeal to spread Islam and offering to the Persian Emperor the alternative of losing his kingdom or accepting Islam. The war between the Muslims and the Persian Empire had already begun in the time of Abu Bakr and the above incident took place in the reign of Omar. It was not the Muslims who had invaded the Persian territory without having been given a provocation but the Persian Emperor who seeing the rise of a new religion and a new Power in Arabia had sought to nip it in the bud and this led to the commencement of hostilities between him and the Muslim State. The war had continued for some years and it was on the eve, evidently of a decisive engagement, that the Muslim deputation went to the Persian Emperor to tell him to abstain from shedding further blood which he could do by coming under their protection and paying a tribute known as *Jizya* or by accepting Islam. A people who had launched a wanton attack on

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another people could possibly have not had the hardihood to tell those same people of the great blessings of a religion which evidently had turned them into marauders and dacoits. As war had been imposed upon the Muslims first to exterminate Islam and later to stem the rising tide of the Muslim power; and as the Muslims had taken up arms either in defence of their religion or their newly established State, they could not, once the hostilities had begun, lay down their arms till they themselves had been annihilated or the enemy had been crushed or it had by accepting Islam joined the Islamic brotherhood. This is only the meaning of the above *hadith* of the Holy Prophet and nothing else and to infer from it that the Prophet or his followers waged a bloody *Jihad* against non-believers to make them accept Islam at the point of the sword is belied by the text of the Quran, numerous sayings of the Prophet, by his practice and that of his followers and by the established facts of history.

Objects of the Prophet's Expeditions

It would not be out of place here to say a word about the purpose and object of the expeditions which the Prophet dispatched from time to time and about which so much misunderstanding exists.

It is true that all the ten years of the Prophet's life at Medina were spent in fighting his wars of defence. It is equally true that he himself led armies to battle. But all the expeditions which he personally led or sent under the command of his distinguished Companions were undertaken for one of the following purposes, the central object always being self-defence and self-protection :—

1. To make pacts and alliances with the tribes which lived in the vicinity of Medina. If left to

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themselves these tribes would have proved a source of great danger to the Prophet as being situated in his immediate neighbourhood they could be instigated by the Qureish of Mecca and the Jews and Hypocrites of Medina to fall upon him any time.

2. To loot the trading caravans of the Meccans going to and coming back from Syria to Mecca. This was done to compel the Meccans to cease persecution of the Muslims and come to terms with them. It should be remembered that these raids were made upon these caravans after a proper declaration of war was made and long after the Meccans themselves had made identical raids upon the Muslims and had carried away their cattle, etc.

3. To collect information about the movements of the enemy.

4. To anticipate a contemplated or actually organized attack by the enemy.

5. To establish peace and order punitive expeditions were sent.

6. To protect and guard against possible attacks on Muslim missionaries and teachers, soldiers accompanied them.

7. To defend themselves against the attack of the enemy.

Who has the hardihood to say that any of these objects is ignoble? Is not self-defence or to die in defending one's honour and country the greatest human virtue? Leave alone visionaries and unpractical idealists whose ideals man has never and can never live up to, the existence of individuals, as much as that of communities, nations and races depends on the measures they adopt for self-defence, self-protection, self-expression and even self-assertion.

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Another Baseless Charge

Another equally baseless charge against the Prophet which either proceeds from malicious misrepresentation or is the result of a profound ignorance of the history of Islam is, that as long as the Prophet was at Mecca and his position was weak, he taught "patience under attack to his followers as no other attitude was possible," but at Medina because he gathered sufficient strength 'the right to repel attack appears, and gradually it becomes a prescribed duty to fight against and subdue the hostile Meccans'.[1]

A dispassionate study of the circumstances in which the Prophet's flight from Mecca took place and the critical situation he had to face immediately after his arrival at Medina will leave no doubt in the mind of an impartial observer that, far from gaining strength, the position of the Muslims at Medina, in the first few years was decidedly weaker than at Mecca and the Prophet's difficulties instead of lessening had greatly increased. The Qureish were moving heaven and earth against him and Islam was threatened with extirpation by a combined attack from the Arabian tribes. The surrounding tribes among whom the influence of the Qureish on account of their being the custodians of the Ka'aba was supreme, were arrayed in all their desert ferocity against Medina. Medina itself was honey-combed by sedition and treachery. Abdullah bin Ubayy and his band of hypocrites whose designs the Prophet's arrival at Medina had upset though outwardly professing Islam were, in reality, a source of considerable danger to the Muslims. The Jews, compact and united, jealously and relentlessly, were opposed to him. His

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

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own followers were few and weak. These proved facts of history give the direct lie to the charge that because the Prophet's power had increased therefore he took the offensive shortly after arriving at Medina. The outbreak of hostilities was due not to any accession to the military power of the newly-born commonwealth of Islam but to the following causes :—

1. While at Mecca, being a citizen of the Meccan republic, the Prophet, consistently with his professions of being a peaceful and law-abiding man and the founder of a faith which strictly interdicted the disturbance of the peace, could not allow his followers to fight even in self-defence.

2. The Prophet's flight from Medina increased the fury of his enemies and they set about making serious plans to annihilate Islam.

3. They gave these designs a practical shape by writing a letter to Abdullah bin Ubayy who was before Islam the most outstanding national leader at Medina holding out the threat to him that if the people of Medina did not wage war against Muhammad or at least did not expel him from Medina, they (the Meccans) would fall upon the town with all their powerful hosts and allies and kill their men and carry their women to Mecca as prisoners of war.[1]

4. Being the custodians of the Ka'aba, the Qureish wielded a great moral influence among the pagan Arabs and they made use of that moral influence in inciting almost the whole of Arabia to side with them in attacking Medina and exterminating Islam. They

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[1] انكم اويتم صاحبنا وانا نقسم بالله لتقاتلنه اوتخرجنه او لنسرين اليكم باجمعنا حتي نقتل مقاتلتكم ونستبيح نساءكم (ابوداؤد)

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evidently succeeded in achieving their object as the Prophet and the Muslims had to keep armed day and night for fear lest they might be taken unawares by their enemies.[1] To this pitiable plight of the Muslims the Quran has referred in the verse:

> And remember when you were few and were considered weak in the land and were afraid lest people should pluck you away, but He sheltered you and strengthened you with His aid and gave you of the good things that you may give thanks (8 : 26).

5. In Medina itself there were pagans, Jews and hypocrites who did not like to see Islam make progress and were always on the look out to make common cause with any people intending to invade Medina.

Thus when the cup of their affliction and persecution became full to the brim, the permission was given to the Muslims to take up arms in self-defence. But the number of those among them who could wear arms did not exceed a few hundred and they had no ammunition, no implements of war and were very poorly equipped. Surely these ill-trained, ill-equipped and ill-provisioned few hundred persons were allowed to take up arms in self-defence not because with the supposed increase in their military power they had become confident of their success but because realizing to their sorrow that even after fleeing from their homes and hearths and leaving behind every thing that was dear to them in life they were not allowed to live in peace, and they discovered that the only alternative now left to them was either to save their Prophet and religion from utter annihilation by the sword or to perish themselves in the

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[1] كما قدم رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم واصحابه المدينة واوتهم الانصار ورمتهم العرب من قوس واحدة فكانوا لايبيتون الا بالسلاح ولا يصبحون الا فيه (مسند دارمي)

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attempt. That the Muslims were painfully conscious of their utter helplessness and therefore hated the very idea of measuring their strength with the Qureish is quite clear from the following verses of the Quran :

> But when fighting is prescribed for them, lo! a party of these fear men as they should have feared Allah, or even with a greater fear, and say, 'Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us? Wherefore didst Thou not grant us a delay to a near end (4 : 77).

> Fighting is enjoined on you, and it is an object of dislike to you, and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you, and Allah knows, while you do not know (2 : 216).

According to the consensus of scholarly opinion the first verse in which permission was given to the Muslims to take up arms in self-defence was revealed to the Holy Prophet within a year after he had left Mecca. The words of the verse unmistakably show under what conditions that permission was granted and they effectively explode the unfounded theory that the Muslims were the first to wage war and they waged it when they found themselves fully equal to the task and that the purpose of it was to thrust Islam on the unbelievers by force. The Quran says :

> Permission to take up arms is given to those upon whom war is made, because they have been oppressed and most surely Allah is well able to help them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause, only because they say : 'Our Lord is Allah.' And if God had not repelled some men by others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, in which God's name is much remembered, would surely have been destroyed (22 : 39, 40).

The words of the above verse show clearly that war was first made upon the Muslims and they had taken up arms only in self-defence, that they had suffered great hardships and oppression at the hands of their opponents, that the Muslims were very weak at the time when the permission to fight was given to

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them, that they entirely relied on God's help for their success and finally that they had resorted to the sword to establish freedom of conscience and to save mosques and other places of worship from destruction. This verse alone constitutes an irrefutable answer to the silly and totally baseless charge that Islam was spread by the sword. Islam had nothing to gain from entering upon a war which diverted the attention of its followers from the sacred task of carrying its message to all the peoples, especially when the Muslims knew that a state of war was an hindrance in the way of the spread of their faith. Islam has always made great progress in a peaceful atmosphere. It has made more progress in India during the last 75 years after the Mutiny of 1857 when Muslim Empire was finally broken than during the 800 years of Muslim rule and it is advancing with rapid strides in Africa under the British flag and even in the western countries, apparently without being indebted to the swords and spears of its warriors. It wishes to live and let other faiths live and wants only to win adherents by its irresistible appeal to human reason and conscience and this is why it severely frowns on any attempt to win converts by force and also keeps the door open for those who having once accepted it are persuaded to give it up.

Apostasy and Islam

It is indeed regrettable that not only has misunderstanding for long persisted with regard to Islam being preached and propagated by force but an equal amount of misapprehension exists about its laws of apostasy. There is a school of thought among the Muslims who sincerely are wedded to the belief that whereas Islam strictly forbids that a non-believer be forced or coerced into accepting Islam, it denies him

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the option, once he has joined it by conversion or being born into it, of leaving it at the pain of death, consigning to oblivion the patent fact that to compel a person to accept a religion on the pain of death and to threaten him with death if he dared leave it, is the same thing. If Islam disallows the use of force for the purpose of conversion but allows it to be used against a person who prefers to renounce it, it must with justice be regarded as the greatest enemy of man's most precious and inalienable right—his freedom of conscience—and must forfeit all claim on the allegiance of all intelligent and decent people. But just as those who hold that Islam encourages the use of force for the purpose of conversion labour under a grievous misunderstanding, similarly those who maintain that Islam bars the door against him who wishes to leave it are the victim of an equally serious error. Islam stands for complete and unqualified freedom of conscience. It gives as much freedom to those who do not see their way to accepting it as to those who having once joined it want to leave it. If it holds human life sacred and does not allow the taking of it on the score of the religious beliefs of a person,—and this has been shown in the preceding pages to be one of the fundamentals of Islam—there could possibly be no difference in this respect between an unbeliever and one who has renounced it after having embraced it. Our article would remain incomplete if we failed to refer, even though briefly, to this aspect of the teaching of Islam.

Islam does not Punish Apostates with Death

Just as it is not possible to find a single verse or authentic *hadith* of the Holy Prophet which expresses overt or tacit approval of the use of force for making a person accept Islam, similarly it is impossible to

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point to a single verse or reliable *hadith* of the Prophet which encourages or connives at taking the life of a person who wishes to renounce Islam. The teaching of Islam is as clear and unassailable on the one point as on the other. The Quran says:

> And a party of the followers of the Book say: 'Believe in what has been sent down to those who believe, in the first part of the day, and deny it towards its close, perhaps they may go back (3 : 71).

This verse refers to a plan of the Jews of Medina to turn the Muslims away from their religion. Some of them would accept Islam one day and renounce it the next day, thinking that in this way they would be successful in creating doubts in the minds of the Muslims in regard to the truth of Islam. This verse shows that the Jews practised this wicked plan for some time. Now if according to Islam apostasy would have been punished with death, such a plan was incapable of being conceived much less being carried into actual practice. The very fact that the Jews conceived such a plan and carried it out shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that under the Prophet's rule at Medina all and sundry enjoyed unrestricted freedom as to what religion they accepted and what they denied.

Again says the Quran:

> How shall God guide a people who, after they had believed and bore witness that the Apostle was true, and after that clear proofs of his mission had reached them, disbelieved? God does not guide the people who transgress. Their recomponse is that the curse of God and of angels and of all men is on them. Under it shall they abide for ever, their torment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite. Save those who after this repent and amend, for verily God is Gracious, Merciful. As for those who disbelieve after having believed and then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted and these are they who are the erring ones (3 : 85, 89).

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These verses are an irrefutable repudiation of the charge that the punishment for apostasy in Islam is death. According to these a person could accept and reject Islam with impunity as many times as he liked and he rendered himself liable to no punishment. These verses of the Quran are supported by other verses of similar connotation some of which we give below:

> He who disbelieves in Allah after having believed, not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith, but he who opens his breast for disbelief—on these is the wrath of God, and they shall have grevious chastisement (16 : 106).
>
> Surely those who believe, then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, God shall not forgive them nor guide them in the right path (4 : 137).
>
> And they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can, and whoever of you turns back from his religion, and dies an infidel—these it is whose works shall be fruitless in this world, and in the next they shall be consigned to the fire (2 : 217).
>
> O you who believe! should any of you turn back from his religion God will bring a people whom He shall love and who shall love Him (5 : 54).

Verses of identical import can easily be multiplied and there is no mention, even no hint, express or implied, in these verses, to show that Islam punishes apostasy with death. The Quran being the primary source of the Islamic law and the question of apostasy being one of paramount importance, the total absence of the mention of any kind of punishment to be accorded to those who give up Islam in the Quran establishes conclusively the fact that Islam gives to a person as much freedom in rejecting and renouncing it as it gives him in accepting it.

Hadith Supports the Quran in this Respect

The *Hadith* is second only to the Quran as a source

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of Islamic law and so if a *hadith* were to be found prescribing death or for that matter any kind of punishment for apostates, it being evidently in conflict with the clear, express and unequivocal injunctions of the Quran will be rejected as apocryphal. But the fact is that the upholders of the view that Islam punishes apostasy with death have not been able to get hold of a single authentic saying of the Holy Prophet supporting or substantiating it. In this respect the *Hadith* gives the Quran its fullest support. The fact that *Bukhari*, the most reliable and authentic collection of the sayings of the Holy Prophet, deals in two separate chapters with two kinds of apostates shows that there are apostates and apostates and the injunctions of the Quran in regard to one are quite different from those that apply to the other. The one chapter is entitled as *Kitab-al-Moharibin min ahl al-Kufr wal-ridda* (the chapter dealing with those unbelievers and apostates who fight against the Muslims) and the other bears the heading *kitab istitaba al muanidin wal-murtaddin wa qitalihim* (the chapter dealing with the repentance of the enemies and the apostates and fighting with them.—(*Bukhari*, Pāra 28, Pages 1, 54). The classification of apostates under two separate headings, *i.e.*, those that fight against the Muslims and those who do not clear the whole confusion that has existed with respect to the kind of punishment Islam metes out to the apostates. Islam has no cause or justification to quarrel with the beliefs of a person. He may join it whenever he likes and leave it when it ceases to satisfy his conscience or reason. Islam will not carp or cavil at him. But if the Muslim State is at war with a non-Muslim State and a Muslim deserts to the enemy's camp, for such an apostate Islam has

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prescribed death as penalty and this penalty, in fact, is not for the rejection of the faith of Islam but for desertion in time of war from the Muslim army and joining the forces of the enemy and death is regarded as a most lenient punishment for a deserter even in the present so-called civilized 20th century. The fact that Islam finds no fault with a person who renounces it and goes to a people who are in alliance with the Muslims or if not in actual alliance are not at war with them, knocks the bottom out of the foolish charge that death is the penalty in Islam for an apostate. The Quran says:

> Except those who seek an asylum with a people with whom you are in alliance, or those who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people. Had God pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have made war upon you, therefore if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then God has not given you a way against them (4 : 90).

Instances are not wanting of people who accepted Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet but for some reason or other renounced it and left Medina and the Prophet was naturally grieved at their apostasy but did not, in any manner, interfere with their choice. "An illiterate Arab of the desert," relates Bukhari (*Fath-ul-Bari*, V. 13, p. 173), "came to Medina and accepted Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet. Then he fell sick and thinking that the fever was due to his becoming a Muslim came to the Prophet and said, 'give me back my pledge of allegiance'. The Prophet refused, the man repeated his demand. The answer again was an emphatic no. Then the man left Medina. Upon this said the Prophet of God: 'Medina is like a furnace which clears gold of dross. It throws out filth and dirt and keeps back what is

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pure.'"[1]

The Prophet's Practice Agrees with the Quran

The most effective refutation of the charge that Islam has laid down death as punishment for apostasy are the terms of the Truce of Hudaibia according to one of which a Muslim who wished to renounce Islam and join with the Meccans was allowed to do so but a non-Muslim who became a Muslim and wished to come to Medina was not allowed to do so[2] (*Bukhari*, Vol. II, p. 76). In the face of the terms of the Truce of Hudaibia which is one of the most important events in Islamic history it needs no further proof to show that Islam allows perfect freedom of choice and will to any one who wishes to come to it or reject and renounce it. Another incident of very great importance in Islamic history which throws a flood of light on this question is the apostasy of Abdullah bin Abi Sarah. He was one of the Holy Prophet's scribes and had gone over to the Meccans. On the fall of Mecca he was one of those few persons about whom the Prophet had given orders that they should be put to death wherever found not because he had given up Islam but because he had gone over to the enemies of the Prophet. Hazrat

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[1] عن جابر بن عبدالله ان اعرابياً بايع رسول الله صل الله عليه وسلم علي الاسلام فاصاب الاعرابى وعك بالمدينة فجاء الاعرابي الي رسول الله صل الله عليه وسلم فقال يا رسول الله اقلنى بيعتى ثم جاءه فقال اقلنى بيعتي فابي فخرج الاعرابي فقال رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم انما المدينة كالكير تنفي خبثها وتصمع طيبها (فتح الباري)

[2] صالح النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المشركين يوم الحديبية علي ثلاثة اشياء علي من اتاه من المشركين- رده اليهم ومن اتاهم من المسلمين لم يردوه (بخاري)

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Usman whose step-brother he was, gave him protection and he was pardoned and in the reign of Usman was made governor. If Islam had laid down that apostasy be punished with death, Usman could certainly have not flouted an important Islamic injunction by giving him protection. He was a deserter, a political criminal and therefore was ordered to be put to death and as a political criminal was forgiven by the Prophet.[1]

There are no doubt some sayings of the Prophet which divorced from their context have given rise to the doubt that Islam has prescribed death for apostasy. The Holy Prophet is reported by Zaid bin Aslam, to have said, "kill a person who changes his religion."[2] Another saying recorded by Tabrani is, "he who renounces Islam and changes this religion for another, kill him."[3]

An *hadith* on Apostasy Explained

But these sayings of the Holy Prophet if accepted literally run counter to the unequivocal verses of the Quran and to a large number of the Prophet's own authentic *Hadith* and contradict the whole practice and procedure of his life. The words "he who changes his religion" evidently mean 'he who renounces Islam and goes over to the enemy's camp'. Ayesha, that talented spouse of the Holy Prophet to whom the *Ummat* of the Prophet owes a deep debt of gratitude for solving

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[1] كان يكتب لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فازله الشيطان فلحق بالكفار فامر به النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم ان يقتل يوم فتح مكة فاستجار له عثمان بن عفان فاجاره النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم (روح المعاني)

[2] عن زيد بن اسلم ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال من غير دينه فاضربوا عنقه (مؤطا - مالک)

[3] من خالف دينه دين الاسلام فاضربوا عنقه (طبرانی)

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many a knotty religious problem, has not failed to give a solution of this difficult and disputed question also. According to her the Holy Prophet said: "The shedding of the blood of a Muslim is strictly prohibited except for one of the following three offences: a married man who has committed adultery, a person who has intentionally killed another person and a person who leaves Islam *and then wages war against God and His Apostle.*[1]

According to another *hadith* related by Abdullah bin Masud the Prophet said: "The shedding of the blood of a Muslim is not allowed except on account of one of the following three offences: a married man who has committed adultery, a person who has killed another man and a person who gives up his religion and deserts the Muslim community.[2] These two *hadith* fully explain what the words "he who changes his religion" or "he who adopts a religion in place of Islam" really mean. At the time of the fall of Mecca, Ibn-i-Khatal and Muqees bin Sababa, two apostates, were put to death by the orders of the Holy Prophet not because they had renounced Islam but because each of them had killed a Muslim and afterwards had deserted to the Meccans.

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[1] عن عائشة ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لايحل دم امرى مسلم الا باحدى ثلاث خصال زان محصن يرجم او رجل قتل رجلاً متعمدا فيقتل او رجل يخرج من الاسلام فيحارب الله عزوجل ورسوله فيقتل او يصلب او ينفي من الارض (بخارى)

[2] عن عبد الله بن مسعود قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لايحل دم رجل مسلم.....الا باحدي ثلاث - الثيب الزاني والنفس بالنفس والتارك لدينه المفارق للجماعة (مسلم)

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Another *hadith* which throws further light on the question is the one related by Ibn-i-Abbas. According to him. the Prophet said, "women, when they apostasize, should not be killed."[1]

Now if Islam had laid down death as punishment for apostasy, no distinction could possibly be made between men and women apostates. Apostate women are not allowed to be killed because generally they do not take part in actual fighting and therefore as any woman who happened to apostasize in the Prophet's time was not expected to engage in fighting against the Muslims they were not allowed to be killed after they had renounced Islam. This *hadith* also shows that Islam does not punish apostasy with death but only to those apostates who after renouncing Islam join the forces of the enemy and take part in actual fighting against the Muslims is this punishment meted out. The fact that Abu Bakr caused a woman named Umm-i-Qurfa to be put to death because after apostasizing she used to incite her thirty sons to fight with the Muslims[2] shows that Islam does not differentiate between a woman apostate and a man apostate. Both are allowed perfect freedom if only they give up Islamic beliefs but both are liable to meet the extreme penalty if after renouncing Islam they join with the people who are at war with the Muslims or themselves start fighting against them.

Fiqh and Apostasy

A word about what the Muslim jurists have to

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[1] عن ابن عباس لا تقتل النساء اذا هن ارتددن (عینی- شرح بخاری)

[2] و ام قرفة كان لها ثلاثون ابناء وكانت تحرضهم علي قتال المسلمين و فی قتلها كسر شوكتهم (مبسوط)

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say on this question and we shall have taken leave of this topic. Dealing with the question as to why apostate women are not put to death the author of *Hidaya* says that a departure from the principle of putting women apostates to death is allowed because women by constitution are unfit to take part in fighting. According to the author of *Fath-ul-Qadeer*, another renowned jurist, an apostate is put to death in order to check his mischief of taking part in fighting against the Muslims and not on account of his unbelief because the punishment for unbelief is by far greater than that of killing a person. So only that person is to be killed who has taken part in fighting against the Muslims and as only men and not women can wear arms, the Holy Prophet has strongly condemned the killing of women in or about the field of battle (*Fath-ul-Qadeer*, Vol. IV, page 339).

Again in *Chalpi* we find : " No one is punished for adopting unbelief because the punishment of unbelief is beyond the power of man to award which God alone can inflict."

Again in *Inaya* on page 390 we find written : " No killing is allowed without fighting. That person alone should be killed who has taken part in fighting against the Muslims. Mere unbelief does not make a person liable to be put to death. This is why a blind man, a decrepit and a cripple are exempt from this punishment."

Christian Treatment of Apostates

In the face of such broad-minded, practical and humane teaching it is an act of the highest injustice to say that as a religion Islam was propagated by the sword and upheld by the sword. Islam did, indeed, seize

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the sword but it seized it in self-defence and held it in self-defence, as it will ever do. Situated as the Prophet was the wonder is not that he had to unsheathe the sword. The wonder is that he shed so little blood to fulfil his great mission. Islam never interfered with the dogmas of any moral faith, never persecuted people, never established an Inquisition. It never invented the rack or the stake for stifling difference of opinion, or strangling human conscience, or exterminating heresy. No one who has a competent knowledge of history can deny that the Church of Christ, when it pretended to be most infallible, "shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind;" whilst the fate of the man or woman who forsook the Church, or even expressed a preference for any other creed, was no less cruel. Burnings and hangings, and tearing out and twisting of tongues were the usual penalties of refusal to adopt the orthodox communion. In England, after it became Protestant, the Presbyterians, through a long succession of reigns, were imprisoned, branded, mutilated, scourged, and exposed in the pillory. In Scotland, they were hunted like criminals over the mountains; their ears were torn from the roots; they were branded with hot irons; their fingers were wrenched asunder by thumbkins, the bones of their legs were shattered in the boots. Women were scourged publicly in the streets. The Catholics were tortured and hanged. Anabaptists and Arians were burned alive. But as regards non-Christians, Catholics and Protestants, orthodox and un-orthodox, were in perfect accord. Musalmans and Jews were beyond the pale of Christendom. In England, the Jews were tortured and hanged. In Spain, the Muslims were burnt. Marriages between Christians and Jews,

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and Christians and "infidels" were null and void, in fact, prohibited under terrible and revolting penalties. Even now, Christian America burns alive a Christian negro assaulting a Christian white woman. This has been the effect produced by Christianity.[1] Such is the record of the religion whose votaries accuse Islam of intolerance and of preaching its doctrines by the sword.

Islam does not Rule Out all War

But though the pith and kernel of the teachings of Islam is peace and toleration and though it strongly condemns and repudiates the idea that "war is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative element in the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with" (Bernhardi) and that "without war the world would stagnate and lose itself in materialism," (Moltke) it does not subscribe to the view that "all war is necessarily waste, wicked damnable waste". Islam is a practical and a matter-of-fact religion and has no foolish or vain idealism about it. Some of its ordinances and principles certainly do not appeal to weak and sentimental dreamers and idealists nor to those unpractical visionaries who choose to live in a world of their own creation wholly divorced from the hard realities of life. But Islam is an idealistic religion too. It has set down ideals so pure and sublime for man to achieve that it is beyond human mind to conceive anything approaching them in grandeur and excellence. But while inducing man to spare no pains or effort to achieve them, it has never ceased to urge him to meet things as he finds them and not to ignore realities in the pursuit and quest of unachievable ideals. While Islam has laid down detailed laws and ordinances which seek to establish permanent peace on earth, it has never lost

[1] *The Spirit of Islam.*

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sight of the fact that occasions arise in the life of nations and communities when to follow the will-o-the-wisp of peace amounts to national suicide and humanity's greatest service then lies in wearing arms and striking the enemies of peace and ordered progress. War in such circumstances is no war but the cancellation and prevention of war. 'Resist not evil' is a principle which has never been acted upon even by those who are not tired of dilating and dwelling upon its imaginary and fancied beauties. Do not resist evil when you find that non-resistance will lead to the moral regeneration of the evil-doer and appreciably contribute to the cause of general peace and resist it with all your might and main when such is not the case. This is Islam's basic principle and is evidently in perfect harmony with the fundamental laws of human nature. All this cavilling and carping at Islamic laws in regard to war arises from want of appreciation of what is good and moral.

Definition of Moral Qualities

Certain natural human qualities are erroneously considered as moral qualities and certain others as immoral qualities. Nothing that is inborn or ingrained in human nature is in itself good or bad. It is the occasion only upon which anything is done that justifies or condemns a deed. The inborn or natural qualities of man are transformed into moral qualities when a person does or refrains from doing an act upon the right occasion and after a due consideration of the good or evil that is likely to result from it (*Teachings of Islam*).

Now "it is natural to resent and to repel or retaliate, any harm done or attempted against ourselves, or against those with whom we sympathise."

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(John Stuart Mill). All the laws of Islam about war consist in the right use of this natural and inborn human quality of resenting, repelling and retaliating an harm done to us or to our friends and allies. Islam believes in no imperialistic wars. Aggressive wars or wars for self-aggrandisement it severely condemns. Wars undertaken for the sake of securing new markets and for teaching the conquered races the art of self-government as did England in the 19th century and for giving education and civilization to barbarians as Italy so shamefully did only a few months ago by depriving a whole people of their freedom and slaughtering them by liquid fire and poison gas, are things unknown to Islam. But to take up arms and die in defending one's own honour and possessions or the honour and freedom of one's country, it regards, an act of the highest virtue and according to no canons of ethics and morality, not according even to the Utopian Christian teaching about non-resistance, can a war undertaken in self-defence be regarded as promoting war and spreading hatred and animosity.

Objects of Islamic Wars

The Quran being a perfect code of laws has not failed to describe the circumstances under which the waging of war becomes an act of the highest moral virtue and therefore obligatory upon the Muslims. The first and foremost of these is when war is made upon the Muslims. The Quran says :

> Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed and most surely God is well able to help them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah. And if God had not repelled some people by others, cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques in which

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God's name is much remembered, would certainly have been pulled down (22 : 39, 40).

Almost all historians are agreed on this point that these verses embody the earliest permission for Muslims to fight. Their very words explain the reason why this permission was given. The purpose of the Muslims in taking up arms was never to deprive weak nations of their homes and hearths, or to deprive whole peoples of national freedom or to compel them to submit to foreign yoke under the garb of making them civilized or to explore new markets and get new colonies. It was to fight in self-defence. It was to repel the attacks of those who wanted to compel the Muslims to give up their faith, to deny them freedom of conscience and liberty of thought. The Muslims were compelled to leave their homes. Their only offence was that they worshipped one God. Their flight from their dear and near ones did not assuage the hatred and placate the fury of their enemies. They sought to make a hell of their lives even in their newly-found asylum. It was to defend themselves against such an utterly unjustifiable and wicked war that the Muslims, much against their will, had to take up arms. The second purpose of the Muslim wars is described in the Quran as defending the places of worship belonging to different religions. It is another name for freedom of conscience. To protect the place of worship belonging to the followers of a certain religion from being pulled down is to allow him to worship God in the way he likes. So the first and foremost object of the Islamic wars was and will always be to establish freedom of belief and worship and to defend one's country, honour and freedom against an unprovoked attack. Could there be a better justification for taking up arms than this? This subject is also dealt with in other verses of the Quran : (2 : 251, 8 : 73).

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The second great object of Islamic wars is outlined in the verse :

> And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for God (2 : 193).

This verse may be interpreted to mean as has actually been done by some Christian writers, that the Muslims are enjoined to fight with the infidels till all the unbelievers are either killed or they accept Islam so that only one religion remains and that is Islam. There are so many verses in the Quran and such clear and unambiguous sayings of the Holy Prophet which emphatically contradict this misinterpretation of this verse of the Quran that in their face only a Christian writer is capable of putting on it the above construction. A similar verse shows it to be incapable of bearing the construction put upon it by Christian writers and establishes it beyond doubt that in the sentence " religion should be only for God " by religion is meant not Islam but all religions. That verse is :

> And fight with them until there is no persecution and all religions are for God (8 : 39).

Islam Conscious of its Unrivalled Superiority

These two verses prove that the great object the wars of the Muslims were intended to serve was the establishment of freedom of conscience. The laying of so much stress by the Quran on the establishment of the freedom of conscience shows Islam to be convinced of its superiority over all other faiths. This conviction has been proved to be well-founded by facts of history. Islam welcomes nothing so much as a peaceful and calm atmosphere and a dispassionate and impartial study of its tenets and teachings. This consciousness of Islam of its superiority over all religions and of the

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righteousness of its cause is reflected in another verse of the Quran :

> Say : I exhort you only to do one thing. Rise up for God's sake in twos and singly, then ponder and you will find that there is no madness in this fellow-man of yours (Muhammad); he is only a warner to you before a severe chastisement (34 : 46).

The Quran invites those who entertain doubts about the truth of the Holy Prophet and about the divine origin of the Quran to sit in solitude and think dispassionately and deeply over the principles and doctrines of Islam or hold public meetings and have joint discussion over the subject. The result of such thinking in solitude or holding religious conferences would be that the Quranic teaching would be proved to be infinitely superior to any other teaching, temporal or divine. No wonder, then, that a religion which is so convinced of its own unapproachable excellences, should have laid the greatest stress on the freedom of religious beliefs and practices.

Islam on Sanctity of Treaties

In another verse of the Quran the Muslims have been urged to fight against those who break pledges solemnly entered into. To save from violation the international treaties is another object of the Islamic war. Islam holds sacred all international treaties and pacts and makes it incumbent upon the Muslims to declare war against that party or nation which is guilty of violating them. It is inconceivable for a Muslim to treat a pact as a mere scrap of paper. The so-called civilized nations of the West feel not the least compunction in breaking solemn treaties when it suits their purpose. Hitler has remilitarised the Rhineland in violation of the Locarno Pact and Mussolini committed a rape on weak Abyssinia in defiance of the Covenant of the League and the whole Christendom looked on while

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a Christian country was being torn to pieces by another Christian country. Mussolini violated the Covenant by attacking Abyssinia and the League violated it by not helping the aggrieved party against the aggressor. The Quran would not allow such a thing to happen. It says :

> Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Apostle and they attacked you first (9 : 13).

Another cause to defend which the Muslims are enjoined to take up arms is to help their oppressed and persecuted brethren. The Quran says :

> And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah while the weak among the men and the women and the children, say : Our Lord! take us away from this town whose people are oppressors, and be Thou our guardian and be Thou our helper (4 : 75).

This verse was revealed after the permission to wage war against the Meccans had been granted to the Muslims.

Another class of people against whom the Muslims are commanded to take up the sword are dacoits, robbers and murderers who cause disorder in a peaceful country and wage war against the authority established by law. These people are considered to have waged war against God and His Apostle and by so doing have forfeited their lives. The Quran says :

> The punishment of those who wage war against God and His Apostle and try to cause disorder in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on account of opposition or they should be imprisoned (5 : 32).

The above verses of the Quran clearly show that the Muslims can take the field against their enemies only (1) in self-defence, *i.e.*, when war is made on them to destroy Islam and the refusal to defend means

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its extermination; (2) when a treaty or a pact solemnly signed is violated; (3) when Muslims living under a non-Muslim State are oppressed and persecuted provided war has already been declared between that State and the Muslims, this condition serving as an additional cause to continue fighting till the oppressed are rescued or cease to be persecuted; and (4) those who disturb the peace of the land and commit murders and dacoities and marauders are also commanded to be fought against and exterminated.

Islam does not Believe in Racial Superiority and Imperialistic Wars

So far as we know these are the only causes for which Muslims can fight and we do not think that any fair-minded person can take exception to any one of these. Islam, unlike Christendom, believes in no imperialism and racial superiority and, therefore, there is no place for imperialistic wars or wars waged to impose a so-called superior culture and civilization on a supposedly barbarous people, in the Islamic teaching. Freedom is the birth-right of every people and they can be deprived of it for no reason except when they themselves forfeit it by trying to deprive another nation of it. A nation or a country is tempted to wage war against another country or nation in order to exploit it economically or to impose its supposed superior culture on it. The Quran condemns both these kinds of wars :

> Do not lift thy eyes to those worldly benefits which We have bestowed upon other nations to try them in their actions. That which thy Lord has bestowed on thee is best for thee and most lasting (20 : 129)

meaning, that things plundered from others are neither lasting nor can they be of any benefit, and that which God bestows alone can last even unto the next

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world. About the foolish and wicked idea of national superiority the Quran says :

> Let not a people despise another, haply the latter may turn out better than the former (41 : 11).

Again it says :

> We cause the periods of adversity and prosperity to revolve between different peoples (3 : 139).

A nation that is advancing towards prosperity should not, therefore, despise another nation, and thus sow the seed of hostility, it may be that the nation that is despised to-day may lead the other to-morrow.

In fact international wars cannot be put an end to till it is realised that mankind are one nation and that prosperity and adversity are neither the hereditary nor the permanent qualities of a nation. No nation has had a uniform record of prosperity or adversity, nor can any nation be secure, in the future, against an adverse change in its circumstances. The volcanic forces that raise a nation to the highest pinnacle of glory or pull it down to the lowest depths of ignominy have not ceased to work, and nature pursues its designs as actively to-day as it has done through centuries past.

To the foolish notions of fancied superiority on the basis of caste, colour or country the Prophet gave a final quietus in the memorable words he uttered on the occasion of his Last Pilgrimage before a vast concourse of Muslims. "An Arab, he said, has no right to consider himself in any way superior to a non-Arab, nor can a non-Arab think himself better than an Arab. All of you are the progeny of Adam and Adam was created out of dust." [1] (*Zad-ul-Ma'ād*)

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[1] ليس للعربي فضل علي العجمي ولا للعجمي فضل علي العربي كلكم ابناء آدم وآدم من التراب. (زاد المعاد)

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Islamic Laws of War

So Islam denounces all kinds of wars except defensive wars and it has explored all avenues to create a peaceful atmosphere in the world where people may enjoy the fullest freedom of religious thought and practice. No religion is a greater enemy of war and a greater friend of peace than Islam. But if in spite of the efforts of a Muslim State to prevent war a war breaks out and the Muslims are sought to be deprived of their freedom and home-lands, Islam enjoins them to take up arms to defend themselves and regards it an immoral act to sit with hands folded and allowing themselves to be extirpated. And whereas Islam has prescribed detailed laws for the prevention of war, it has not omitted to lay down as to how, when once war breaks out, it should be conducted so as to shed as little human blood as possible. If war is forced upon an Islamic State, says Islam, care should be taken not to injure women, children, nurses, old men and those who lead lives wholly devoted to the service of religion ; and it is permissible only to kill those in battle who are combatants and are actually taking part in the fight. Quarter must in all cases be given, and unnecessary damage should not be caused. Crops, trees and buildings must be spared, unless their destruction is absolutely necessary for purposes of defence or in order to put the enemy out of action. Damage must not be caused merely to weaken a nation after the war. Proposals for a truce or a peace should not be rejected merely on the supposition that the other side is acting dishonestly and only desires to gain time. So long as the dishonesty does not become apparent such proposals ought to be welcomed.

Concerning the sanctity of treaties, Islam teaches that treaties should be kept not only with those who

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are actually parties to them but also with those who have entered into treaties with the latter. So that an Islamic State is prohibited from making war upon the allies of its friends even when the governments of such allies form a part of the empire of their enemies, provided that they do not openly join or actively help such enemies. If treachery is apprehended from a people with whom a treaty has been concluded, they should not be attacked suddenly, nor should any undue advantage be taken of them: They should first be warned that as they have been guilty of a breach of faith the treaty is at an end, and if they still persist in their treachery war may be declared against them. Here are some of these instructions embodied in the Quran and the *hadith*:

> 1. And fight in the Way of God with those only who fight with you and do not exceed the limits, surely God does not love those who exceed the limits. And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and mischief is worse than killing, and do not fight with them at the sacred mosque until they fight with you in it, and if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers. But if they desist, then surely God is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should only be for God and if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors (2 : 190, 191, 192, 193).

These verses contain almost all the fundamental laws of Islam about war. They are (1) Muslims are to fight only in self-defence; (2) they are to fight to establish freedom of conscience; (3) even during the war the Muslims are not to commit excesses and (4) the fight is to cease the instant the enemy sues for peace.

> 2. And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it and trust in God; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee—then certainly God is sufficient for thee (8 : 71, 62).

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If the enemy sues for peace, the Muslims are enjoined to cease fighting whatever the conditions may be; the fear that the enemy may be acting dishonestly and thus defrauding the Muslims of their victory should not be allowed to reject the offer of peace.

> 3. Therefore if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then God has given you no excuse to fight with them (4 : 90).
>
> 4. God does not forbid you to deal with kindness and fairness towards those who have not made war upon you on account of your religion nor have driven you forth from your homes, for God loves those who act with fairness. God only forbids you to make friends with those who, on account of your religion, have warred against you, and have driven you forth from your homes, and have aided those who drove you forth: and those who make friends with them are wrongdoers (60 : 8, 9).

In the face of these verses, it is the height of injustice to say that the Muslims offered death or Islam to all the unbelievers. The Quran here encourages friendship between Muslims and those non-Muslims who have not waged war against the Muslims or have not aided and abetted those who are fighting them.

> 5. And let not the enmity of a people, *viz.*, their obstructing you from the sacred mosque, lead you to transgress: but rather be helpful to one another in good and righteous deeds and be not helpful to one another for sin and transgression and fear God (5 : 2).
>
> 6. O you who believe! be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety and be careful of your duty to God (5 : 8).

Could a book containing such injunctions with propriety and fairness be accused of teaching religious fanaticism and intolerance and of offering the non-Muslims the choice between sword or conversion to Islam?

> 7. And if any of the idolaters seek protection from you, grant him protection till he hears the word of God, then make him attain his place of safety (9 : 6).

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Islam gives an asylum to even those individual idolaters belonging to tribes at war with the Muslims who come to the Muslims to learn about Islam and after they have heard the word of God gives them safe conduct back to their people. But the detractors of Islam say that once the Muslims took up the sword they scattered death and destruction far and wide and only those who professed Islam could save their skins. What a world of difference between the real teaching of Islam about the unbelievers and those attributed to it by its enemies !

> 8. And as for those who believed and did not go to Medina to share the adversities of the Muslims, not yours is their guardianship until they fly to Medina. But if they seek aid from you in the matter of religion, it is incumbent upon you to aid them except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty (8 : 72).

> 9. And if they break their pledges after their agreement and openly revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief—surely their pledges are nothing—so that they may desist. Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and strove to expel the Apostle and they attacked you first (9 : 12, 13).

It is against those who break treaties and who attack the Muslims first that Islam takes up the sword. Islam holds international pacts very sacred. One of the reasons that render the waging of war obligatory upon the Muslims is the violation of treaties. It is to defend their national existence from annihilation and to establish peace and liberty of thought and the sacredness of treaties that the Muslims had to unsheathe their swords and not to impose their beliefs upon non-Muslims. Islam never was propagated by the sword. The truth is that those who attempted to destroy Islam by the sword were themselves destroyed by the sword. Such a charge is a cruel libel against a religion which was the first to teach and preach perfect tolerance.

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Reformation effected by Islam in the Conduct of War

The above are some of the injunctions of Islam about war. As Islam has not ruled out all wars because it possibly could not, it has sought to effect great improvements in the manner of conducting them. Before and at the time of the Prophet wars were waged for the sole purpose of subjugating the surrounding weak nations, therefore the result usually of such wars was then, as it is now, that the victors imposed their will on the vanquished completely. No value was attached to human life and suffering, no difference was made between the combatants and the non-combatants, no respect paid to sex or age. The sacredness of treaties was unknown ; pacts were made and broken as convenience dictated. Ambassadors were killed. War meant pillage, plunder, massacre, arson and rapine. Islam put a complete stop to all these evil practices. The following are some of the changes and reformations effected by Islam in the conduct of war.

1. The Prophet's invariable advice to the Muslim soldiers when he sent an expedition was :

> O ye people ! Never welcome an engagement with the enemy and ask of Allah peace and safety and if you happen to face the enemy, then be brave and steadfast.[1]

This *hadith* also shows that the Muslims are enjoined never to provoke or welcome war but if they are compelled to have recourse to arms, they are required to be brave, firm and resolute.

2. The Prophet was asked about a person who fights to give a demonstration of his courage and bravery, about another who fights on account of

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[1] يا ايها الناس لا تتمنوا لقاء العدو واسئلوا الله العافية فاذا لقيتموهم فاصبروا واعلموا ان الجنة تحت ظلال السيوف (بخاری)

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national jealousy or for love for his clan or country and yet about another who fights that people may see and admire his dauntless courage, which of these will be considered to have fought in the way of his Lord." "None of these," replied the Prophet, "the man who fights that the word of God may be exalted is the person who really fights in the way of God."[1]

3. A man came to the Prophet and said: "A person fights for the sake of booty, another fights that he may acquire fame, yet another fights so that he may win public praise and applause, which of these will be considered to have fought in the way of God." "None of these," the Holy Prophet replied, "only that person will be regarded as a fighter in the way of God who fights that God's name may be exalted."[2]

4. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

> Fighting is of two kinds; (1) a person fights to win the pleasure of God and gives unquestioning obedience to his chief and spends the best of his money in the way of God and shuns all sorts of mischief and disturbance, his sleeping and waking and all other actions will be deserving of reward and (2) a person fights to display his skill, bravery and dauntlessness and to become famous and does not obey his chief and creates mischief in the land, he will instead of recieving any reward, only succeed in incurring God's displeasure.[3]

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[1] سئل رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم عن الرجل يقاتل شجاعة ويقاتل حمية ويقاتل رياء اى ذالك في سبيل الله قال من قاتل لتكون كلمة الله هي العليا فهو في سبيل الله (بخارى)

[2] جاء رجل الي النبي فقال الرجل يقاتل للمغنم والرجل يقاتل للذكر والرجل يقاتل ليري مكانه فمن في سبيل الله قال من قاتل لتكون كلمة الله هى العليا فهو فى سبيل الله (بخارى)

[3] الغزو غزوان فاما من ابتغي وجه الله واطاع الامام وانفق الكريمة واجتنب الفساد فان نومه ونبهه اجر كله واما من غزا رياء وفخراً وسمعة وعصي الامام وافسد في الارض فانه لا يرجع بالكفاف (ابو داؤد)

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5. A person came to the Holy Prophet and said :

> O Prophet of God ! a person fights for the sake of God honestly and sincerely but at the same time entertains a secret desire that he may come in possession of some looted property, would such a desire be incompatible with his sincere intention as a fighter in the way of God.

The Prophet replied that such a desire would deprive him of all reward. The man repeated his question thrice and every time the answer was the same.[1]

6. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said :

> Those who fight in the way of God but happen to get some booty, become deprived of two-third of the reward they would have got in after-life but if they come back from the field of battle empty handed they will get their reward full.[2]

These sayings of the Prophet clearly and unmistakably show with what sincere and honest motives the wars of Islam were fought and how anxious and solicitous the Holy Prophet was that they should not become an instrument of pillage and plunder, of showing one's valour and skill and of wreaking vengeance on the enemy and they also show that he always discouraged recourse to arms and allowed it under circumstances when a refusal to take up arms was tantamount to national suicide. In the face of such pure teaching the enemies of Islam have the hardihood to assert that Muhammad released hosts of dacoits and marauders on defenceless people to impose his religion on them and to kill, plunder and pillage. The world has yet to produce a man who was half so pure, half so full of the milk of human kindness and half so solicitous that truth and righteousness may rule the world.

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[1] ان رجلا قال يا رسول الله رجل يريد الجهاد في سبيل الله وهو يبتغي عرضاً من الدنيا فقال لا اجر له فاعاد له ثلاثاً كل ذالك يقول له لا اجر له (نسائي)

[2] ما من غازية تغزو في سبيل الله فيصيبون غنيمة الا تعجلوا ثلثى اجرهم من الاخرة ويبقي لهم الثلث وان لم يصيبوا غنيمة تم لهم اجرهم - (مسلم)

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8. Boreeda relates that when the Holy Prophet would despatch an army to fight the enemy he would invariably give the following instructions to its commander:

> When you are face to face with the enemy against whom war has already been declared, before commencing actual fighting invite them to accept one of these three alternatives and if they accept any of these, then do not fight with them: (*a*) invite them to accept Islam and if they do, believe in their honesty and stay your hands; (*b*) then persuade them to do *hijrat* to Medina in which case they shall enjoy all the rights of *muhajireen* and bear their responsibilities but if they refuse to do *hijrat* to Medina then tell them that they would remain deprived of the rights and privileges pertaining to *hijrat* though they will be regarded and treated as Muslims and (*c*) if they reject your invitation to accept Islam, ask them to come under the protection of the Islamic State and agree to pay *jizya*. But if they refuse to accept any of these three alteratives, then relying on the help of God begin fighting.[1]

It is clear from the above that the alternative of *jizya*, Islam or sword was not flung in the face of every

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[1] عن بريدة رضی اللہ عنہ قال کان رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم یقول اذا لقیت عدوک من المشرکین فادعہم الی ثلاث خلال فان اجابوک فاقبل منہم وکف عنہم. ادعہم الی الاسلام فان اجابوک فاقبل منہم وکف عنہم ثم ادعہم الی التحول من دارہم الی دار المہاجرین واخبرہم انہم ان فعلوا ذالک فلہم ما للمہاجرین وعلیہم ما علیہم فان ابوا ان یتحولوا منہا فاخبرہم انہم یکونون کاعراب المسلمین یجری علیہم حکم اللہ تعالی الذی یجری علی المومنین ولا یکون لہم فی الغنیمۃ والفئی شیئ الا ان یجاہدوا مع المسلمین وان ہم ابوا فسلہم الجزیۃ فان ہم اجابوک فاقبل منہم وکف عنہم فان ابوا فاستعن باللہ وقاتلہم (مسلم)

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unbeliever but in order to avoid bloodshed and to settle differences amicably it was offered to those enemies of Islam who had declared war against the Muslims and had actually taken the field against them. Islam was a missionary religion from its very inception. Every Muslim was saddled with the responsibility of conveying its message to all non-Muslims with whom he came in contact. The Muslims have ever regarded it as an act of the highest piety to preach Islam to non-Muslims. This is why Muslim Ambassadors in addition to the discharge of their official duties always invited the kings and monarchs at whose courts they represented the Muslim State to accept Islam. It was in this spirit that before the commencement of every engagement the Muslims would ask their enemies to enter the brotherhood of Islam and thus partake of the spiritual blessings they themselves had enjoyed. We do not think this presentation of Islam to unbelievers even on the field of battle, can, according to any canons of the ethics of war, be regarded as a reprehensible act and be interpreted as offering Islam or death to the enemies. These instructions of the Holy Prophet show that the Muslims were not always on the look-out to shed as much blood as they could but that they left no avenue unexplored to avoid shedding it and also that they were so convinced of the truth of their faith, that they would invite their enemies to accept it even on the field of battle.

9. The Prophet invariably gave his troops the following instructions on the eve of their departure for the field of battle :

> Fight in the name of God and in the way of God. Be on your guard against embezzlement and misappropriation. Act not dishonestly and with treachey and do not mutilate the enemy's dead. Kill no babe or woman and the dwellers

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of cloisters and monasteries.[1]

According to the late Syed Amir Ali, the Prophet used to give following instructions to his army when he himself was not leading it :

> In avenging the injuries inflicted upon you, molest not the harmless inmates of domestic seclusion, spare the weakness of the female sex; injure not the infant at the breast, or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their subsistence, nor their fruit trees; and touch not the palm (*The Spirit of Islam*).

According to the same writer Abu Bakr gave the following instructions to one of his generals :

> When you meet your enemies quit yourselves like men, and do not turn your backs; and if you gain the victory, kill not the little children, nor old people, nor women. Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill for the necessity of subsistence. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons that live retired in monasteries, who propose to themselves to serve God that way. Let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries (*The Spirit of Islam*).

10. The Prophet had given strict orders that no person should be made prisoner unless the fight was in full swing.

11. The Prophet never attacked the enemy in the silence and darkness of the night. He always launched his attack in the broad-day light.[2] This

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[1] اغزوا بسم الله وقاتلوا في سبيل الله ولا تغلوا ولا تغدروا ولا تمثلوا ولا تقتلوا وليداً ولا امراة ولا تقتلوا اصحاب الصوامع (مسلم)

[2] كان رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم اذا غزا قوماً لم يغز عليهم حتي يصبح (بخاري)

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shows his great regard for human life. In the darkness of the night it was not possible to distinguish between the combatants and the non-combatants and he always gave strict orders that non-combatants should be left alone.

12. The Holy Prophet strictly forbade the burning to death of the members of the enemy's forces.[1]

13. He instructed that Ambassadors be shown due respect and given safe conduct. Addressing Musailma's plenipotentiaries he said:

> If the laws of civilized warfare had not disallowed the killing of Ambassadors I would have you killed.[2]

14. He was insistent that under no circumstances should those whom an asylum had been given or promised be interfered with.[3]

15. At the fall of Mecca he gave strict orders that no wounded persons should be attacked, no one who was fleeing away should be chased, no prisoner was to be killed and he who closed the door of his house should be left alone.

16. During a military march the Muslim soldiers forcibly got hold of some lambs and killed them for their meal. When the Prophet came to know of it he had the kettles turned over and exclaimed in anger that a thing snatched from its owner by force was not better than a carcase.[4]

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[1] قال لاينبغى ان يعذب بالنار الا رب النار (بخارى)

[2] لولا ان الرسل لا تقتل لضربت اعناقكما (ابو داؤد)

[3] من قتل معاهداً لم يرح رائحة الجنة (بخارى)

[4] ان النهبة ليست باحل من الميتة (ترمذى)

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17. The Prophet strictly forbade that a person be bound over and then killed or tortured.

18. The prisoners of war were ordered to be treated kindly, a subject which requires separate treatment. The Quran says :

> And they give food out of love for God to the poor and the orphan and the captive' (76 : 8).

The Muslims carried this injunction of the Quran into full effect. " Blessings be on the men of Medina," said one of the men taken prisoner at Badr in later days, " they made us ride while they themselves walked ; they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates."[1]

19. Respect was paid to the enemy's dead and they were given decent burial under the orders of the Prophet.

20. The Muslims were strictly forbidden to indulge in plundering and looting.

21. As soon as the enemy came in sight the Prophet always prayed to God and the Muslims were ordered to pray for success before commencing actual fighting. Surely the shedders of innocent human blood who offered to unoffending, harmless people the choice between death or Islam could not humble themselves before God and supplicate Him to grant them success.

22. When dispatching his troops on an expedition the Prophet summed up his valedictory instructions in the words :

> Carry glad tidings and do not frighten people. Create comforts and conveniences for them and do not put them into troubles.[2]

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[1] William Muir's *Life of Muhammad.*

[2] بشروا ولا تنفروا ويسروا ولا تعسروا (مسلم)

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23. Drinking and gambling which have never ceased to be regarded as good means to engender courage, fearlessness and reckless bravery among soldiers, the Prophet abolished completely and outright. This abolition, on the one hand, put an end to barbarous practices prevalent among the ancients and on the other killed that intrepidity and entire disregard for consequences which indulgence in war creates.

24. The Prophet decisively prohibited plundering and in this way closed all avenues to that greed and barbarity which incite unpaid soldiers (the Prophet's soldiers were unpaid) to start fighting without any legitimate cause. During those ten years in which the Prophet combined in his person the dual capacity of the builder of a nation and that of the organiser and commander of an army, scores of battles took place. But not a single instance is on record when his soldiers were found indulging in loot and plunder. The remarkable example of discipline and self-control displayed by his soldiers at the time of actual fighting is incomparable in human history. That an army whose all expenses and remuneration were met from the booty which it gained from its defeated and vanquished adversary should set such an example in restraint and moderation and should refrain from inflicting any loss on the belligerent party while not in the actual state of fighting, is indeed a marvellous thing and this is how those sons of the desert—the Arabs, vehement and impulsive by nature and possessed of passions as burning as the sun of their desert, behaved. The credit for impressing on them habits of self-control and self-restraint goes to that great Prophet whom ignorant Europe has misunderstood and misrepresented. We have yet to know of a man who brought about half as much transformation among his followers as he did.

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This is why, perhaps, the Prophet's most inveterate enemy, Stobert, has to admit that, "judged by the smallness of the means at his disposal and the extent and permanence of the work he accomplished, no name in the world's history shines with a more specious lustre than that of the Prophet of Arabia".

Islam Seeks Help of Non-Muslim Nations to Outlaw War

This is how Islam seeks to prevent war and if in spite of the Muslims' best intentions it breaks out, how it seeks to terminate it as soon as possible and makes it humane. The above are briefly the teachings by which Islam singlehanded and without the help and co-operation of other faiths and nations strives to prevent and end war. But it has not ignored to seek the co-operation and help of other nations to outlaw it. The fearful destruction wrought by the European war of 1914—18 brought the League of Nations into existence. This League was intended to usher into international relations an era of perpetual peace and co-operation. The sponsors of the League thought that the Great War had proved a blessing in disguise inasmuch as it succeeded in giving practical shape to an idea which had remained for generations in an embryonic state. But the League did not rise above the position of a debating club for second rate politicians and in spite of the best efforts that England has made to render it an effective instrument for preventing war by various pacts and protocols it has failed to come up to the high expectations entertained about it and America's refusal to join it and Germany's defection and Japan's defiance and its consequent exit and last of all Italy's brutal invasion of Abyssinia flouting Geneva's pleadings and protests, have almost killed it.

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Islamic Conception of a League of Nations

For the settlement of international disputes Islam lays down rules which contemplate a body like the present League of Nations; only this League of Nations does not yet embrace functions which Islam enjoins on such a body.

The Holy Quran says:

> If two Muslim nations fall out, make peace between them (*i.e.*, other Muslim nations should try to prevent a war between them, and should try to remove the causes of friction and should award to each its just rights). But if one of them nevertheless attacks the other (and does not accept the award of the League of Nations) then all must fight the former, till it submits to the command of Allah (*i.e.*, till it is willing to abide by an equitable settlement) and when it so submits, make peace between them, and act with justice and equity, for God loves the just) (49 : 9).

This verse lays down the following principles for the maintenance of international peace :—

As soon as there are indications of disagreement between two nations, the other nations instead of taking sides with one or the other of them should at once serve a notice upon them, calling upon them to submit their differences to the League of Nations for settlement. If they agree, the dispute will be amicably settled. But if one of them refuses to submit to the League, or having submitted refuses to accept the award of the League, and prepares to make war, the other nations should all fight it. It is apparent, however, that one nation, however strong, cannot withstand the united forces of all other nations and is bound to make a speedy submission. In that event, terms of peace should be settled between the two

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original parties to the dispute. The other nations should act merely as arbitrators and not as parties to the dispute, and should not put forward claims arising out of the conflict with the refractory nation, for that would lay the foundation of fresh disputes and dissensions. In settling the terms of peace between the belligerent nations care should be taken that the terms arrived at are just and equitable with reference to the merits of the dispute. The arbitrators should not be influenced by the fact that one of the parties had defied their authority.

It a League of Nations were established on these lines, international peace would be secured at once. All mischief arises out of the fact that when two nations begin to quarrel, the other nations either play the part of amused spectators, or take sides in the dispute. Such conduct, instead of removing the causes of friction, accentuates them. The other nations should, without expressing any opinion as to the merits of disputes, call upon the parties concerned to submit their differences to the League of Nations, and should reserve the expression of their opinions till they have heard all the parties and completed their enquiry. They should then make their award. If either party refuses to accept the award the nations composing the League should make war upon it, till it makes submission, and when it does so they should settle the original dispute between the parties and should not put forward new demands arising out of the conduct of the refractory nation. For, if the nations composing the League, were to take advantage of the position of the vanquished nation and impose terms on it calculated to secure advantages to the arbitrators themselves, they would be laying the foundations of mutual dissensions and jealousies, and the League would not be able to command the respect and sympathy of the peoples of different nations. Their final award should, therefore, be confined to the original dispute between the parties and should not travel beyond it.[1]

1 *Ahmadiyyat or The True Islam.*

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Islam on Slavery

Another important question which requires a passing notice here is the question of slavery in Islam; what has Islam to say about those unfortunate persons who are taken prisoners in wars, what status or position it gives to them, how are they to be dealt with and in what manner can they get back their freedom? That Islam has perpetuated the institution of slavery in the world, is the unseemly and entirely unfounded charge that Christian writers have not ceased to impute to our faith. Islam most emphatically denies and repudiates this charge.

We maintain that of all divine Messengers and Prophets of God, of all founders and builders of the different creeds, faiths and religious systems, of all social reformers and philanthropists and of all those teachers and leaders of men who, at any time, in any land and in any form contributed to the social uplift and moral and spiritual regeneration of humanity, the share of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam, was by far the largest. And one of the greatest services to mankind of this greatest and noblest of men was his open, clear and unequivocal condemnation of, and the effective measures he took to abolish, those social injustices that were practised and are unfortunately still practised in some lands by one section of society against another. He was the avowed friend of the oppressed and the down-trodden. His mind rebelled and revolted against the then prevalent idea that man could be bought, sold and treated by man as a mere chattel. His ideal of human brotherhood and the inborn and inherent equality of all men was indeed very lofty and sublime in conception. It could scarcely be reconciled to the practice of slavery that was so widespread as to have become inextricably interwoven and deeply rooted in the social conditions as well as in the ideas of his time.

It had become an institution very vastly extended in its operation and methodised in its details. It was

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indeed a sickening sight for one who held such a noble and sublime conception of the inherent faculties, inborn capacities and capabilities of man to see him (man) entirely deprived of the freedom of his will and action, deprived of his initiative, of the freedom of choice and selection. His heart burnt to see the iniquities and enormities practised by man upon man. He grieved and pined for this miserable section of humanity. He would if he could abolish altogether by a stroke of the pen a system so repugnant and revolting, so destructive of all the noble human instincts, of all that distinguishes man from beasts and brutes. But this system, this practice, this institution had become an integral part of the whole fabric of human society. To abolish it all of a sudden was not wise, not practicable, nor even possible. It meant a death-blow to the entire existing social order. The sudden emancipation in hundreds and thousands of those who having been held in bondage for generation after generation had lost all capacity and initiative to find work and to do it, would have seriously told upon the moral tone of the society. Jobless and workless they would have turned into vagabonds, thieves, pick-pockets, swindlers and what not. This was precisely what the Prophet wished to avoid and he did avoid. He laid down precepts and injunctions which were intended to do away with slavery gradually but surely and effectively.

The Prophet and Slaves

"No free man henceforth is to be turned into a slave," was his unequivocal and unmistakable commandment. "The reduction of a free man to slavery is tantamount to murder," he said. "God will not accept the worship of a person who reduces a free man to slavery and will seek redress against this wrong as His own on the Day of Judgment," is another saying of the Prophet. These explicit and express commandments gave a death-blow to this wicked institution for ever. But there was to be one exception to this general rule. Those who should participate in a war undertaken to

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destroy Islam and to impose their own beliefs and doctrines upon the Muslims at the point of the sword were to be deprived of their freedom when taken prisoners actually fighting or found helping in any way those engaged in fighting. Even this denial of freedom to war prisoners, call it slavery if you will, was only to last till those prisoners had discharged their share of the responsibility of their guilt by paying their share of the cost of war. If this is slavery, Islam pleads guilty to it. But according to what canons of morality or international law of warfare is it condemnable, reprehensible or even unjustifiable? And what civilized nation of antiquity or modernity has not been guilty of practising this form of slavery?

There is a clear injunction to this effect in the Quran. It says: "When you meet in battle those who do not believe, then smite the necks until when you have overcome them, then make them prisoners, and afterwards either set them free as a favour or let them ransom themselves until war terminates" (47 : 4). This verse embodies the clear injunction that prisoners are to be made in open warfare alone and that they are to be kept deprived of their freedom till only that time when the Muslims set them free either as a favour or after taking ransom from them. The Holy Prophet, that much-maligned "perpetuator" of slavery very often adopted the former course. About a hundred families of Bani Mustaliq and some six thousand prisoners belonging to the tribe of Hawazin were set at liberty merely as an act of favour by the Prophet. Only in the case of the prisoners of Badr a ransom was demanded and that was because the Muslims were very weak at that time and the Meccans were bent upon destroying them.

The Prophet laid down instructions and directions which were calculated to greatly ameliorate the condition of the slaves and raise their status and gradually to lead to their complete liberation and their becoming useful members of the human society. These injunctions are of two kinds:

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(*a*) Temporary provisions bearing upon the general improvement and betterment of the moral and social condition of the existing slaves and their speedy enfranchisement.

(*b*) Instructions of a permanent nature aiming at the complete and total extinction for ever of slavery in every shape and form.

Contract with the Slaves

One of the provisions of a permanent nature by means of which the slaves could get their freedom independently and irrespective of the fact whether their masters liked it or not is embodied in the following verse of the Quran :

> Those of your slaves who wish to enter into a written contract with you, free them by making with them the contract they ask for if you realize that by achieving their freedom they will become useful members of the Muslim society and help them to secure their freedom with the wealth which God out of His infinite grace and mercy has given you (24 : 33).

The contract spoken of in the above verse was a kind of civil contract which was entered into by the slave and his master according to which a definite amount of money or labour was fixed as the price of the freedom of the slave. After the contract was duly written and attested to, the slave was considered as manumitted and was quite free to earn the required amount of money by any legitimate means he liked. After he had paid the whole stipulated amount he was as free as his master. Let it be understood that the fact whether the slave was fit to enter into a contract of the above character with his master was to be decided by the State and not the master as also the amount of the money to be paid and the manner and the time-limit of its payment. No choice was left to the owner if the slave applied for such a contract and the State considered him to be quite fit for it with the conditions and stipulations decided by the State but to accept it. Let it also be understood that though

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not lawfully but morally the slave was considered as a partner in the money which he supplied to his master as the price of his freedom. By this excellent arrangement Islam secured to all slaves in the possession of the Muslims their full freedom, steering clear also of the terrible moral and social evils to which the whole Muslim society had fallen a helpless victim if slavery would have been abolished by a stroke of the pen.

Islam and *Jizya*

Much misconception exists also about Islamic teaching with regard to *jizya*. The Christian writers are never ashamed of repeating the charge that Islam carried fire and sword wherever it went. The infidels, they allege, were offered the alternative of Islam or death but to the *Ahl-i-Kitāb*,—the people of the Book—Islam was a little more lenient. In their case to the above two alternatives a third was added. They could save this lives, if they refused to accept Islam, by paying *jizya* to their Muslim rulers. *Jizya* is thus shown to be a tax which was levied on non-Muslim subjects of the Muslim State—barring the pagans of Arabia—as a punishment for not giving their spiritual allegiance to Islam. This charge is as unfounded and malicious as the one that Islam was propagated by sword. The word *jizya* according to Lane's Lexicon (Part 2. Page 422) means "the tax that is taken from the non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim Government, whereby they ratify the compact that ensures them protection." Now the very definition of the word shows that the non-Muslim subjects of the State were required to pay a tax in return of the protection afforded to them by the State and is it really very enormous that those who enjoy the protection of the Muslim State should contribute in some shape or form to the public burdens? *Jizya* was a tax levied on only the able-bodied non-Muslim subjects in lieu of military service from which they were exempt but those non-Muslims who rendered military service to the State were not required to pay this tax. In respect of levying taxes, the Muslim State was, if anything, more exacting to its Muslim than its non-Muslim subjects. The non-Muslims

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enjoyed the option of either rendering military service to the State or giving a nominal tax of a *dinar* per head, a year. The Muslims enjoyed no such option. They had to render military service and give the *Zakat* which was a much heavier tax than *Jizya*, into the bargain. "If we separate the political necessity" says Gobineau, "which has often spoken and acted in the name of religion, no faith is more tolerant than Islam to the followers of other creeds." 'Reasons of State' may have led a sovereign here and there to display a certain degree of intolerance, or to insist upon a certain uniformity of faith; but the system itself has ever maintained the most complete tolerance. That *jizya* was a military and not a religious tax which was levied only upon those able-bodied, fit-for-military-service non-Muslims who wanted to get exemption from this service is evident from the fact that all women and children, old people who were unfit to do any work, the blind, the crippled and those incapacitated by disease, the destitute and those poor people who could not earn their living were exempt from this tax. The great Omar once saw a blind old *Zimmi* begging. On finding that he had to pay *jizya*, he not only helped him from his own pocket but reprimanded the official concerned for demanding tax from a person whom it was the duty of the State to support and issued permanent orders that all non-Muslims in similar circumstances should get stipends from the State-treasury. Full consideration was shown to the physical and financial condition of the *Zimmis* in collecting *jizya* from them and the purpose, use and significance of this tax become clear from the well-known historical incident that when under pressure from the overwhelming Roman hordes the Muslim armies had to leave Hims, Abu Obeida, their Commander, sent for the chiefs of the town and regretting the inability of the Muslim forces to protect them, returned to them the amount collected from them as *jizya*.[1]

So there is no doubt about it that *jizya* was a tax levied from those *Zimmis* (people to whom the

[1] *The Caliphate*, W. Muir.

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Muslim State had given its protection) who enjoyed Muslim protection but wanted to get exemption from military service; those *Zimmis* who served in the army were not in any manner distinguished from the Muslim soldiers. Non-Muslim tribes or principalities which had accepted Muslim suzerainty and protection against attacks from their enemies had also to pay a nominal tribute. This tribute was also known as *jizya*.

Islam and the *Zimmis*

Islam has also been accused of maltreating its non-Muslim subjects and of imposing disabilities upon them. This charge is as cruel and malicious as unjust. The *Zimmis* suffered from no religious, social or political disabilities or disqualifications. They were never molested in the exercise of their faith. They enjoyed perfect freedom from all manner of interference and had equal social and political rights with their Muslim compatriots. The Muslim Caliphs always guaranteed them the safety of their lives, liberty and property. That was in pursuance of the Prophet's orders and example. He said: "he who tyrannises over a person who has accepted the protection of the Muslims and has pledged to live under them and in any way seeks to do him harm or saddles him with a work or obligation which it is not possible for him to fully discharge or takes away anything from him without his perfect agreement or acquiescence, I will demand justice on his behalf, on the Day of Judgment, against his tyranniser."[1] (Abu Daood). "The Prophet granted to the Christians of Najran and the monks of the monastery of St. Catherine a charter which has been justly designated as one of the noblest monuments of enlightened tolerance. By that document the Prophet himself undertook and enjoined upon his followers to protect the Christians to defend their churches, the residences

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[1] من ظلم معا هداً او انتقصه او كلفه فوق طاقته او اخذ منه شيئاً بغير طيب نفسه فانا حجيجه يوم القيامة (ابو داؤد)

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of their priests, and to guard them against all injuries. They were not to be unfairly taxed ..... Christian women married to Muslims were to enjoy their own religion, and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account ..... No image or cross shall be destroyed, they shall not oppress or be oppressed ; no tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops. If the Christians should stand in need of assistance for the repair of their churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to their religion, the Muslims shall assist them." [1]

There could be no greater testimony to the toleration and generosity of the Muslims to their non-Muslim subjects than that given in their favour by the Christians themselves. In the reign of Usman, the third Caliph, the Christian Patriarch of Merv addressed the Bishop of Fars named Simeon a letter in the following terms :

> The Arabs who have been given by God the kingdom (of the earth) do not attack the Christian faith ; on the contrary they help us in our religion ; they respect our God and our religion, and bestow gifts on our churches and monasteries.[2]

Muslims and *Zimmis* Equal in the Eye of Islamic Law

This is how Islam protected the religious rights of the non-Muslims. As regards their political rights, no Muslim was allowed to acquire the land of a *Zimmi* even by purchase. A *Zimmi* could not be dispossessed of his property. The *Zimmis* and Muslims were absolutely equal in the eye of the law. " The blood of the *Zimmi* is like the blood of the Muslim",[3] said the Caliph Ali. Omar on his deathbed entrusted the *Zimmis* to the special care and protection of his Successor.[4] If a

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[1] *The Spirit of Islam.*

[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] اوصيه بذمة الله وذمة رسوله ان يوفي لهم بعهدهم وعن يقاتل من وراءهم ..... الخ
(كتاب الجهاد-بخاري)

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Zimmi was killed by a Muslim, the latter was liable to the same penalty as in the reverse case. A Muslim named Bakr bin Walid killed a Christian in the reign of Omar. The Caliph ordered that the killer should be surrendered to the heirs of the killed. The culprit was handed over to the murdered man's heir who put him to death.[1] (*Zailie*, P. 338). In the Prophet's own time a Muslim had killed a *Zimmi*. He was killed by the Prophet's orders who said: "Of all people on me lies the responsibility of redeeming the pledge we had given him".[2] In the reign of Ali, a Muslim was suspected of killing a *Zimmi*. A criminal case was instituted against him. He was found guilty. The Caliph ordered the killer to be put to death. His brother and heir said that he had accepted the blood-money. The Caliph suspected that pressure had been put upon the man.[3] He however satisfied the Caliph that he had accepted blood-money of his own accord. Then the Caliph let him go and said: "He who has come under our protection, his blood is like our blood and his blood-money equal to our blood-money."[4]

This shows the great regard the Successors of the Prophet had for the life, safety and property of the *Zimmis*. In the matter of punishment of crimes complete equality existed between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. The *Zimmis* who were destitute or unable to earn their living, were not only exempt from *jizya* but got stipends from the *Bait-ul-Mal* as stated above. The following charter was granted by Khalid bin Walid to the inhabitants of Hira:

> This is also their right that if a person among them becomes too old to do anything or is afflicted with a

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[1] زيلعي

[2] انا احق من وفي بد متة (دا رقطني)

[3] لعلهم فزعوک او هدودک (زيلعي)

[4] من کان له ذمتنا فدمه کدمنا ودیته کدیتنا (زیلعی)

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misfortune or misery or is reduced to destitution after having been rich so that he is obliged to beg alms from his people, not only will he be exempt from paying *jizya* but he and his family shall get their subsistence from the State treasury."[1]

Such was the religion and such its adherents whom unjust and malicious Christian writers have accused of being intolerant to the followers of other faiths living under their protection and of presenting to non-Muslims the alternative of Islam, sword or *jizya*. Could prejudice and wicked misrepresentation go further? The world has yet to see a system which has given to its subject nationalities rights and guarantees which Islam has given to the *Zimmis*. The laws of Islam in all their multifarious facets are incapable of being improved upon.

Dar-ul-Harb and *Dar-ul-Islam*

This is what we had to say to clear the misunderstandings that have been sedulously spread by Christian writers in regard to Islamic teaching about *jihad*. But it is not only the hostile and biased Christian writers who have misunderstood and misrepresented the Islamic standpoint, there exists an equal amount of misunderstanding about some of the important Islamic principles among the Muslims also. There is a school of thought among the Muslims who emphatically maintain that there could possibly be no real peace and rapprochement between Muslims and non-Muslims—certainly not between the Muslims that live under a non-Muslim government and their rulers. They have divided the whole world into *Dar-ul-Harb* (seat of war) and *Dar-ul-Islam* (abode of Islam). That part of the globe which is not under Muslim rule, they think, is *Dar-ul-Harb* and according to them, there could be no peace between *Dar-ul-Harb*

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[1] و جعلت لهم ايما شيخ ضعف عن العمل او اصابته آفة من الافات او كان غنياً فافتقر و صار اهل دينه يتصدقون عليه طرحت جذيته و عيل من بيت المسلمين هو و عياله (ابو داؤد - كتاب الخراج)

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and *Dar-ul-Islam*. These foolish advocates of Islam envisage it as being always at war with the whole non-Muslim world, a view which is in open conflict with the explicit teaching of the Quran and of the Holy Prophet. It is this baseless view of a section of the so-called adherents of Islam that has given support to the Christian propaganda that Islam is a religion of the sword and was maintained and propagated by the sword. There is another class of Muslim jurists who have introduced a third division, *Dar-ul-Sulh*, a country having made a treaty of peace with the Muslim State. This foolish and invidious classification finds no support in the Quran or the *Hadith*. Islam is a religion of peace. It wants to live at peace with other religions. It belives in no aggressive wars and no imperialistic conquests. It is only when war is made on a Muslim country by a non-Muslim country with the aim and intention of exterminating Islam that the Muslim State is permitted to take up the sword in self-defence. For the Muslims the whole world is *Dar-ul-Islam* as long as war is not made on a Muslim country. Only that country is *Dar-ul-Harb* for them which does not accord them full religious freedom or in any manner interferes with the exercise of their religious rites. The idea that the mere fact that a country having non-Muslim rulers renders it *Dar-ul-Harb* is in open conflict with the Quran, the *Hadith* and with the views of some of the greatest leaders of religious thought in Islam.

Iqbal on *Jihad*

Those so-called Muslim leaders like Iqbal who live in a world of their own imagination, flattered and fawned upon by a certain class of brainless parasites, and seek to solve the knotty international problems with idle and empty talk, may please themselves with the idea that a Muslim is born to rule and not to be ruled and therefore no non-Muslim State is entitled to his allegiance. They may call others who do not subscribe to this foolish view as cowards and the sons of a decayed culture. They may ridicule these sane and sincere champions of the cause of Islam as "being deprived of all spiritual

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vitality" and "for having been resigned to their political servitude." They may persuade themselves into believing that by thus pandering to the base sentiments of a few parasitic nincompoops they render an invaluable service to Islam. But the fact remains that by propagating such manifestly absurd ideas they not only expose the Muslims to a serious charge of being wholly unreliable subjects who will take the first opportunity to rise against their non-Muslim rulers but cast also a terrible reflection on Islam as seeking to infuse a spirit of infidelity, unfaithfulness and insubordination into its followers. A religion which regards itself in a state of perpetual war with the whole non-Muslim world and is believed to teach its followers to withhold their allegiance, whenever possible, from even that non-Muslim Government which gives them peace, security and religious freedom, is, indeed, a great enemy of the world's progress and prosperity and is fit to be thrown on the scrap-heap. But the Islam of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who is the greatest exponent of this immoral view, is as far away from the Islam of the Holy Prophet as darkness is from light. The Quran lends to it no countenance whatever and the *Hadith* rejects and spurns it equally strongly. Iqbal wants to keep alive among the Muslims that militant mentality which has already rendered them oblivious of the real needs of Islam and has made them pin their faith to compulsion and coercion. This militant, uncompromising and bellicose mentality the Poet-Philosopher terms as *Jihad* and on it he builds all his hopes of Islam's future progress and greatness. This conception of *Jihad* is absolutely foreign to the whole spirit and essence of the Islamic teaching and is foreign also to the glorious traditions of the early Muslims. Islam believes in no physical conquests. It seeks only to conquer the minds and the hearts of the people. The Holy Prophet came to enthrone God in the hearts of His servants and it was not because of but in spite of his desire that physical conquests came in the wake of his spiritual conquests. It was when surrounded by a few poor, persecuted and helpless individuals at Mecca that the verses embodying the injunctions to proclaim *Jihad* were revealed to

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the Prophet. Nothing was then further from his mind than the *Jihad* that he was forced to proclaim later on at Medina. The best and greatest *Jihad* was that which the Prophet and his small band of devoted followers carried on against sin, immorality and iniquity at Mecca. The primary significance of the word *Jihad* is evident from the meaning of the roots *jahd* or *juhd* from which it is derived and which Lane's *Lexion* defines as the "using or exerting of one's utmost power, efforts, endeavours or ability, in contending with an object of disapprobation; and this is of three kinds, namely a visible enemy, the devil and one's self (Part 2, page 473). In a narrower sense it means *qitāl* (fighting) also but its original and wider significance is waging war against sin and iniquity and against one's own low passions and base desires. This is the greatest and noblest kind of *Jihad* which is obligatory on all Muslims under all conditions and which never comes to an end under any circumstances. In this *Jihad* the Ahmadis are engaged with all their might and main and with this *Jihad* they hope to make a spiritual conquest of the whole world. But *Jihad* with the sword is allowed only when the sword is unsheathed against Islam and it comes to an end when it goes back into its scabbard. To the kind of *Jihad* which we, the Ahmadis, are carrying on the Quran has repeatedly drawn the attention of its followers. It says:

> And strive hard in the way of God to that great extent to which it behoves you to strive" (22 : 78).
>
> And those who have made all sorts of efforts for us, them We shall surely guide in Our paths (39 : 69).
>
> And whoever strives hard, he strives hard only for the benefit of his own soul (39 : 6).
>
> And do not follow the unbelievers, but by means of the Quran strive against them with a mighty striving (25 : 52).
>
> Yet surely your Lord, with respect to those who fly after they are persecuted, then they struggle hard and are patient, most surely your Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful (16 : 110).

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> Do you think that you will enter paradise while God has not made distinct those who strive hard from among you and has not made distinct the patient (3 : 141).
>
> And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents and if they contend with you that you should associate others with Me of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them (29 : 8).

The real *Jihad*

All these verses were revealed at Mecca, some of them in the early years of the Call and in them the Prophet was commanded to proclaim *Jihad*. Now it does not require an extraordinary amount of intelligence to understand that that poor man who himself was being subjected to all sorts of hardships and privations, whose earnest invitation to his people to shun their evil ways had proved a call in the wilderness, who was looked down upon and spurned by his fellow citizens as one who had lost the balance of his mind, could not be called upon to wage a war against the unbelievers. It shows that the *Jihad* which in the above verses the Prophet was ordered to proclaim was quite different from the *Jihad* as understood by Christian writers and some Muslims——*Jihad* with the sword. The first of the five verses quoted above makes the meaning of *Jihad* quite clear. "Those who strive for us, them We shall surely guide in Our Ways" says the Quran. Surely the believers were not expected to wage war against God. *Mujahida* which is derived from the same root as *Jihad* means to seek God by spending one's riches, exerting one's whole power, sacrificing even one's life and applying one's wisdom in the way of God. This kind of *Jihad* certainly is of a much higher quality than fighting with the sword, killing others and being killed by them. The third verse makes the sense still more clear. "Do not follow the dictates of the unbelievers, says the Quran, and strive against them by means of it (the Quran) with a mighty striving." *Jihad* by the Quran, in the language of the Quran is the greatest kind of *Jihad*. *Jihad* with the sword shrinks into insignificance before it. It requires a greater effort and a greater sacrifice on the part of the believer than *Jihad* with the sword

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because it knows no relenting and no ending while the latter kind of *Jihad* comes to an end when the conditions that bring it into operation cease to exist.

True definition of *Jihad*

These verses constitute an effective answer both to those who labouring under a serious misapprehension believe that because at Mecca the Muslims were weak therefore they were enjoined to bear with patience all cruelties perpetrated on them but when at Medina they found that they could offer successful resistance to the unbelievers they proclaimed *Jihad*; and also to those who confine *Jihad* only to fighting with the sword. *Jihad* was not proclaimed at Medina but at Mecca long before the Prophet had the faintest idea that he would ever be compelled to leave Mecca and seek an asylum in Medina and would have to carry on a defensive war for years. *Jihad* besides fighting with the sword means doing many other things and the doing of those things is considered worthy of a greater reward than fighting with the sword. These verses also offer a crushing reply to those who like the writer of the article on *Jihad* in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* define this word "as spread of Islam by arms". Apart from the meaning and significance of the word *Jihad* occurring in the Meccan verses, that occuring even in the verses revealed at Medina does not necessarily mean fighting with the sword. Here is a verse revealed at Medina: "O Prophet proclaim *Jihad* against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unrelenting to them" (9 : 78). Now the Prophet could not and did not take up arms against the hypocrites because they professed Islam, fought in some battles on the side of the Muslims, said prayers and offered *Zakat*. But God commanded him in this verse to proclaim a *Jihad* against the hypocrites also. He fought against the unbelievers with the sword but not against the hypocrites. He did, however, wage a *Jihad* against both as commanded by God which shows that *Jihad* does not necessarily always mean fighting with the sword. *Jihad* as is apparent from the above verses of the Quran is of many kinds. *Jihad* with the sword is only one of them.

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The *Hadith* also supports our contention. The Prophet is reported to have said:

> The best and the most exalted *jihad* is going on a pilgrimage to Mecca with pure intentions.[1]

Again we are told that a man came to the Holy Prophet and asked his permission for joining in *jihad*. The Prophet enquired of him if his parents were alive, the man replied in the affirmative. "Then go and do *jihad* with respect to them (*i.e.*, serve them)"[2] said the Prophet.

In this hadith *jihad* means the service of one's parents. Again the Prophet is reported to have said:

> One of the greatest *jihads* is to tell the truth before a conscienceless tyrant.[3]

Again once addressing a party of Muslims who had come back from the field of battle the Prophet said:

> You have come back from a smaller *jihad* to a greater *jihad* because *jihad* with one's evil propensities and low inclinations is admittedly a *jihad* of a higher quality than fighting the unbelievers with the sword.[4]

The Prophet has supplemented this *hadith* with another in which he said:

> Fight your passions and desires as you fight your enemy.[5]

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[1] افضل الجهاد حج مبرور (كتاب الجهاد - بخاري)

[2] جاء رجل الي النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم فاستاذنه في الجهاد فقال ء حي والداك قال نعم قال ففيهما فجاهد (بخاري - كتاب الجهاد)

[3] ان من اعظم الجهاد كلمة عدل عند سلطان جائر (ترمذي - ابواب الفتن)

[4] قدمتم خير مقدم وقدمتم من الجهاد الاصغر الي جهاد الاكبر مجاهدة العبد هواه (خطيب)

[5] جاهدوا اهواءكم كما تجاهدون اعدءكم (مفردات راغب)

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Again he is reported to have said:

> Carry on *jihad* against the unbelievers with your hands and tongues.[1]

All these sayings of the Prophet show that *jihad* is not always with the sword, nor *jihad* with the sword is necessarily the best kind of *jihad*.

Islam's Greatest Need

This is the Islamic conception of *jihad* and what a sublime and grand conception it is! In view of the above teachings to say that *jihad* means to wage war against the unbelievers in order to compel them to embrace Islam is to belie history and to deliberately misrepresent Islam. Those who think that non-Muslim rulers are not entitled to the allegiance of their Muslim subjects and consider the proclamation of *jihad* against them to be their religious duty, labour under a grievous error. The return of the past grandeur of the Muslims through *jihad* with the sword is a vain hope and those who cling to it are doomed to severe disappointment. Times have changed. We live under conditions vastly different from those in which Islam took its birth. Ours is the age of publicity and propaganda and now Islam will come to its own not through military conquests but by conquering the hearts and minds of men with its beautiful teachings. To always think in the terms of physical conquests may be the philosophy of that erratic German political thinker—Nietzsche, it is not that of Islam. Islam's greatest need and opportunity now lies in the diffusion and dissemination of its message which possesses a far greater striking power than any sword, gun or bomb. The Muslims have consigned to oblivion this greatest need of their faith with the result that the hope of the return of Islam's past greatness is fast receding into the dim future. Those who regard *jihad* with the sword to be the only means of the restoration of the departed glory of Islam are terribly mistaken.

[1] جاهدوا الكفار بايديكم والسنتكم (مفردات راغب)